

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT

Rendered from the literal and complete
version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus;
and collated with other
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E. POWYS MATHERS

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RODERICK McRAE



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THE EXTRAORDINARY TALE OF THE CITY OF BRASS

*When
The Three-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHAHRAZADE SAID :

IT IS RELATED that there was once, on the throne of the Ommiade khalifats in Damascus, a king—but Allah is the only King—called Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan, who often took pleasure in talking with the wise men of his kingdom concerning our master, Sulayman, son of David (upon the two be prayer and peace!) and in discussing his virtue, his wisdom, and his boundless power over the beasts of the desert, the Ifrits of the air, and Jinn of the sea and under the earth.

One day, as he was listening with great astonishment and an air of disbelief to a tale which was told him of the old copper jars filled with strange black smoke in devilish forms, Talib bin Sahl, the renowned traveller, rose among those who were there and, after confirming what had been said, added: “O Prince of Believers, it was in those copper jars that the Jinn who rebelled against the orders of Sulayman were imprisoned in times past; afterwards they were sealed with the powerful seal and thrown to the bottom of the moaning sea in the outermost parts of Maghrib in

western Africa. The smoke which escapes from them is, quite simply, the condensed souls of the Ifrits, who, on contact with the air, resume their terrible first forms."

The wonder and curiosity of the khalifat was noticeably increased by these words so that he turned to Talib bin Sahl, and said: "O Talib, I am very anxious to see one of those vases filled with the smoke of Ifrits. Do you think the thing possible? If so, I am ready to go on the search myself." "O Commander of the Faithful," answered Talib, "you can have the thing brought to you here, without trouble or fatigue to your sacred person. You have only to send a letter to the emir Musa, your viceroy in the lands of Maghrib; for the mountain, at whose foot lies the sea which holds the jars, is joined with Maghrib by a tongue of land, which may be crossed dryshod. When the emir Musa receives your letter he will not fail to execute the orders of his khalifat."

Convinced by these words, Abd Al-Malik said to Talib: "And who more fitting than you, O Talib, to journey quickly to Maghrib and carry the letter to my emir Musa? I authorise you to draw on my treasure for all that you think necessary for the journey and to take as many men as you need. Above all, hasten, O Talib." The khalifat wrote a letter with his own hand to Musa, sealed it, and gave it to Talib, who kissed the earth between his hands and set out upon the hour for Maghrib, where he eventually arrived without incident.

The emir Musa joyfully and honourably received him and, after taking and reading the letter, carried it to his lips and forehead, saying: "I hear and I obey!" Then he commanded the sheikh Abd Al-Samad to appear before him: a man who had journeyed over

all the habitable earth and was spending the days of his old age in noting down, for the instruction of posterity, the observations which he had made during his countless voyages. When the sheikh arrived, the emir Musa saluted him respectfully, saying: "O Abd Al-Samad, the Commander of the Faithful has sent me a command to set out in search of certain old copper jars in which the rebel Jinn were imprisoned by our master, Sulayman, son of David. They lie at the bottom of a sea which surges about the foot of a mountain; and it seems that that mountain stands in the furthest confines of Maghrib. Although I have known the whole country for a long time I have never heard tell of this sea or the road which leads to it; but you, who have wandered over the whole earth, cannot be ignorant of the place of that mountain and that sea."

The old man reflected for an hour, and then said: "O Musa bin Nusayr, I have memories of that mountain and that sea, but at this late day, I cannot go there alone, much as I would wish to; the road is a very difficult one because of the lack of water in the wells; it would take two years and some months to go and longer to return, if a return were possible from a land whose people have never given a sign of their existence and live in a city perched on the top of that mountain, a city which no stranger has ever entered and which is called the City of Brass."

So saying, the old man fell silent and reflected again before continuing: "I must not hide from you, O emir, that the road is sown with dangers and even with terrors: there is a desert to cross, peopled by Ifrits and the Jinn who guard those lands which, since the beginnings of time, have been innocent of human habitation. For you must know, O son of Nusayr, that the places in the extreme west of Africa are forbidden

to the sons of men; two men only have been able to pass over them, Sulayman the son of David and Alexander of the Double Horn. Since their time silence has been untroubled master of these vast deserts. If, disdaining the mystery of those perils and difficulties, you insist upon carrying out the orders of the khalifat and undertaking a journey through that pathless land with no other guide but myself, you must load a thousand camels with full water-skins and a further thousand with provisions, and take with you the smallest possible number of soldiers; for no human aid could avail us against the anger of those dark powers whose homes we are about to penetrate and it would be dangerous to affront them by a display of useless arms. When all is ready, make your will, O emir Musa, and let us start."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE EMIR MUSA, governor of Maghrib, called upon the name of Allah and did not hesitate; he assembled the captains of his armies and the chiefs of his kingdoms and, making his will in their presence, appointed his son, Haroun, to govern in his stead. Then he made the preparation which Abd Al-Samad had suggested and, taking with him, beside Talib bin Sahl, only that old man and a few chosen warriors, journeyed out into the desert. For days and months the caravan went slowly through flat deserted lands, as empty of all life as is the surface of the sea; and continued in an infinite silence until, one day, the travellers saw some-

thing afar off on the horizon which looked like a shining cloud; and made their way towards it. Soon they distinguished a building, high-walled with Chinese steel, and supported by four rows of gold columns, four thousand paces round. The dome of this palace was of lead and served as a resting place for countless crows, who were the only living things in sight. Upon the great wall, in which opened the principal door made all of massive ebony plated with gold, a vast tablet of red metal bore certain words in Ionian characters. These the sheikh Abd Al-Samad deciphered and translated to the emir Musa as follows:

*Enter and learn the story of the rulers,
They rested a little in the shadow of my towers
And then they passed.
They were dispersed like those shadows
When the sun goes down;
They were driven like straws
Before the wind of death.*

The emir Musa was moved to sorrow by these words and murmured: "There is no other God but Allah!" Then he crossed the threshold with his companions and entered the palace.

There rose up before them, in the midst of a silent flight of large black birds, a high tower of naked granite whose top was lost to view and about whose foot was clustered four circles of a hundred sepulchres, which surrounded a bright crystal tomb. Encompassing the tomb, this inscription was graved in Ionian characters, the letters filled with gold and diversified by precious stones:

*The drunkenness of youth has passed like a fever,
And yet I saw many things,*

*Seeing my glory in the days of my glory.
The feet of my war-horse
Drummed upon the cities of the world;
I sacked great towns like a hot wind
And fell like thunder upon far lands.
The kings of the earth were dragged behind my
 chariot
And the people of the earth behind my laws;
But now
The drunkenness of youth has passed like a fever,
Like foam upon sand.
Death took me in a net:
My armies warred against him in vain,
My courtiers flattered him in vain.
Listen, O wayfarer, to the words of my death,
For they were not the words of my life:
Save up your soul
And taste the beautiful wine of peace,
For tomorrow the earth shall answer;
He is with me,
My jealous breast holds him for ever.*

The emir Musa and his companions, hearing these words translated to them by the old man, could not but weep. They stood for a long time before the tomb and the sepulchres, saying the mournful sentences over to themselves. Then they went towards the tower, which was shut by a double door of ebony, on which these words were picked out in jewels and in the same characters:

*In the name of the Eternal,
In the name of the Master of Strength,
In the name of Him who moves not!
Wayfarer in this place,*

*Look not upon the glass of appearance,
For a breath may shatter it
And illusion is a pit for the feet of men.
I speak of my power:
I had ten thousand horses
Groomed by captive kings,
I had a thousand virgins of royal blood
To serve my pleasure
And a thousand excellent virgins
With moon-coloured breasts,
Chosen from all the world.
They brought forth little princes in my chambers
And the little princes were as brave as lions.
I had peculiar treasures
And the West and the East were two heads
Bowing before me.
I thought my power eternal
And the days of my life
Fixed surely in the years;
But a whisper came to me
From Him who dies not.
I called my captains and my strong riders,
Thousands upon thousands
With swords and lances;
I called my tributary kings together
And those who were proud rulers under me.
I opened the boxes of my treasures to them, saying:
"Take hills of gold, mountains of silver,
And give me one more day upon the earth."
But they stood silent,
Looking upon the ground;
So that I died
And death came to sit upon my throne.
I was Kush bin Shadad bin Ad,
Surnamed the Great.*

Hearing these sublime truths, the emir Musa and his companions burst into sobs and wept for a long time. Then they went into the tower and began to move through the vast halls, filled with emptiness and silence. They came at last to one larger than all the others, vaulted with a dome and furnished alone of all. The plenishing of this room was a gigantic table of wonderfully carved sandal-wood, upon which this inscription was interlaced in fair characters as before:

*About this table
Sat many hawk-eyed kings
With many one-eyed kings
To bear them company;
But now all sit in the dark and none are able,
None are able to see.*

The emir Musa was astonished before the mystery of what he saw; not being able to find any clue in the inscription, he copied the words upon his parchment and then left the palace with his companions in sorrowful mood and continued his journey towards the City of Brass.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEY WENT ON for three days until they saw, outlined against the red rays of the setting sun, the ap-

pearance of a motionless rider, set upon a high pedestal, brandishing a mighty iron lance which glowed like a flame by reason of the fiery star upon the horizon. When they came close they could distinguish that the rider, his horse, and his pedestal were all of brass and that, upon the iron of the lance, were graved these words in fiery characters:

*If you know not where to go
In this forbidden place,
Turn about with all your strength
And I will show
Your path by the direction which at length
I face.*

The emir Musa approached this statue and pushed it with his hand; at once, with the quickness of light, the rider turned and halted with his face towards a point of the compass directly opposed to that which the travellers had been following, so that Abd Al-Samad knew that he had been mistaken and that the new direction was the right one. Turning upon its tracks, the caravan went, in the way which had been shown, for many days, and came at last, at the fall of a certain night, to a column of black stone to which a strange being was chained, one half of the body of which was visible and the other half deeply hidden in the ground. The upper half seemed to be that of some monstrous birth imprisoned there by infernal powers. It was as black and large as the trunk of an old and naked palm tree; it had two great black wings and four hands, of which two were like the taloned feet of lions. A shaggy covering of rude onager-tail hairs moved savagely upon the terrible head, while under the roofs of the sockets flamed two red eyes, and a third shone,

immovably green like that of a tiger or a panther, between the twin horns of the bull-like brow. Seeing the travellers, the body waved its arms despairingly, as if to break the chain which bound it to the black column, and gave forth such mournful cries that the whole party was stricken motionless.

The emir Musa turned towards old Abd Al-Samad, saying: "O venerable, can you tell us what this thing is?" "As Allah lives," answered the sheikh, "it passes my knowledge." "Go nearer and question it," said Musa, "perhaps it will be able to tell us itself." Abd Al-Samad did not wish to show a moment's hesitation, so he went up to the monster, crying: "In the name of the Master who holds beneath his hand all things visible and invisible, I conjure you to answer me! Tell me who you are, how long you have been here, and why you have suffered so strange a punishment."

The body bayed like a dog and then addressed these words to the emir Musa, the sheikh Abd Al-Samad, and their companions:

I am Dahish bin Al-Aamash, an Ifrit of the line of Eblis, father of the Jinn, chained here by the Invisible Strength until the death of time.

Once, in this land governed by the King of the Sea, there was an idol of red agate, which protected the City of Brass, and I was at once the guardian of and the dweller in this idol. All the people of the land came in crowds to consult Destiny through me and to listen to my oracles and prophecies

The King of the Sea, whose vassal I was, held supreme command over all the armies of the Jinn who were rebellious to the orders of Sulayman, son of David, and had named me chief of this army in the event of a war breaking out between himself and

the Master of the Jinn. Eventually such a war did break out and in this way.

The King of the Sea had a daughter, whose beauty was so great that it came even to the ears of Sulayman, and he, being desirous to add her to the number of his wives, sent a messenger to her father to ask her in marriage and at the same time to command him to break the agate idol and affirm that there was no other God but Allah and that Sulayman was the prophet of Allah. Also he threatened him with his vengeance if he did not comply with these commands.

The King of the Sea called together his wazirs and the chief of the Jinn, saying: "Sulayman threatens me with every sort of calamity if I do not give him my daughter and break the idol in which your chief Dahish din Al-Aamash lives. What say you: shall I obey or disobey?"

"Why should you fear the power of Sulayman, O king?" answered the wazirs. "Our forces are as strong as his." Then they turned to me and asked my advice. I said: "Let our answer to Sulayman be a good beating to his messenger." My advice was carried out and then the man was sent away with instructions to tell his master what had happened to him.

When Sulayman learned the treatment which his envoy had undergone, he grew mightily indignant and at once assembled all his forces, both of the Jinn, of men, of birds, and of animals. To Asaf bin Barkhiya he gave the command of his human soldiers; to Dimiryat, King of the Ifrits, the leadership of all the forces of the Jinn to the number of sixty millions and also of the troops of animals and birds of prey which he had assembled from earth and isle and sea. Heading the combined forces himself, Sulayman

entered the lands of my master and drew his army up into battle array.

He set the animals on the two wings in ranks of four abreast and posted the great birds of prey in the air above them to act as sentinels and spies upon our movements and to hurl themselves upon our men when an opportunity served for tearing out their eyes. He put his human soldiers in the vanguard and the army of the Jinn in the rear; he placed the wazir Asaf bin Barkhiya on his right and Dimiryat, king of the Ifrits of the air, on his left. He himself stayed in the centre, sitting upon a throne of porphyry and gold, held up by four elephants, and gave the signal for attack.

At once a terrible noise was heard which increased every minute with the galloping of the soldiers, the tumultuous flight of the Jinn and the birds of prey, the leaping and charging of the men and the wild beasts; the surface of the earth resounded with the tread of a million feet, the air with the beating of a million wings, with howls and yells and cries.

I was in command of the vanguard of the rebel Jinn who owned allegiance to the King of the Sea. I gave the signal to my troops and, leading them myself, threw them upon the opposing Jinn, commanded by the King of Dimiryat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I SOUGHT OUT the king to attack him myself, when suddenly he changed to a bursting mountain vomiting fire, striving to lay me low and smother me under the hurtling coals which he poured in solid waves upon my people. For long I rallied my followers, defended myself, and attacked hardily; it was only when I saw that the number of my foes would surely overwhelm me that I gave the signal of retreat and myself fled away through the air with all the strength of my wings. By the orders of Sulayman we were pursued and hemmed in on all sides by Ifrits, men, beasts, and birds; some of us were stricken to death, others crushed beneath the feet of the great animals, and others hurled from the high air by the birds of prey, with eyes plucked out and flesh torn to ribbons. When I myself was taken, after a flight of three months, I was condemned to be fastened to the black pillar until the death of time; while my followers were changed into smoke and imprisoned in copper jars, which were then sealed with the seal of Sulayman and thrown into the sea which bathes the walls of the City of Brass.

Chained here, as I have been, since the ruin of our power, I cannot well tell you what has happened to the people of this country; but if you journey to the City of Brass perhaps you will see traces of them and learn something of their story.

When the body had finished speaking, it began to shake itself so desperately that the emir Musa and his

companions, fearing lest it should get free or oblige them in some way to free it, hastened away on their journey towards the City, which they now saw afar off, with the light of evening hanging red upon its towers and walls.

Although they were not far from the City when night fell, the surrounding country seemed so menacing that they preferred to wait till morning before approaching its gates; and therefore pitched their tents and slept, being worn out by the fatigues of their journey.

As soon as the first light of dawn came upon the eastern mountain tops, the emir Musa woke his companions and set out with them in order to reach one of the gates as soon as possible. Soon they saw, rising formidably before them in the clear light of morning, the brass walls, which were so polished that they seemed to have come newly out of moulds. They were so high that they had the appearance of being but the lowest range of the gigantic mountains which surrounded them, in whose flanks they were so firmly fixed that they might have been hewn out of the original metal of the hills.

For some time the party halted in motionless silence before this wonder, while their eyes searched for some door by which to enter the city. This they could not find, so they began to walk round the walls, always hoping to discover some entrance. For many hours they continued their search, without seeing any door or breach whatsoever, or person coming towards the city or going from it. Though the day was far advanced, they heard no noise either within or without the walls and could remark no movement either on the walls or at their feet. The emir Musa, without losing hope, encouraged his companions to go on walk-

ing; so they journeyed till evening, seeing nothing but the inflexible line of the brass walls stretching out before them, following the movement of the earth, the valley, and the peaks, and seeming to rise from the bosom of the world itself.

The emir Musa ordered his companions to halt for food and sleep; and he himself sat down to ponder a course of action. When he was rested, he ordered his soldiers to watch over the encampment until his return, and himself, with the sheikh Abd Al-Samad and Talib bin Sahl, climbed a high mountain in order to inspect the surrounding country and more clearly see this city, which offered so stubborn a resistance to human visitors.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT FIRST THEY could distinguish nothing in the darkness, for night had already spread her shadows over the plain; but suddenly the light in the east grew greater and the splendid moon swam from behind the top of a mountain and lighted earth and sky at once with the sparkling of her eyes. Then at their feet unrolled a sight which made them hold their breath.

They were looking down upon a city of dream.

Under the white radiance falling from on high as far as the eye might reach towards the horizon, which was still bathed in night, spread out the domes of

palaces, the terraces of houses, calm gardens levelled in the living brass, moon-bright canals making a thousand wanderings in and out of the shadows of trees, and, lowest of all, a metal sea holding in its cold breast the drowned fires of the sky: so that the brass of the walls, the lighted jewels of the domes, the white terraces, the canals, and all the sea, together with the shadows which lay towards the west, mingled in the night breeze because of the witch-craft of the moon.

This vast prospect was buried in silence as in a tomb; no trace of human life might be found there; but tall figures of brass on monumental bases, mighty riders hewn from marble, winged animals in motionless flight, all showed with the same frustrate gesture of movement: and, in the sky above the buildings, turned, the sole moving thing in all the motionless perspective, thousands of enormous vampires, whose flight was accompanied by the lamentations of invisible owls, calling from the dead palaces and sleeping towers.

When the emir Musa and his companions had filled their eyes with this strange sight, they came down from the mountain in a state of great astonishment; for they had seen no sign of human habitation within the walls; and came to the lower level at a part of the brass battlements where were four inscriptions carved in Ionian character. These the sheikh Abd Al-Samad deciphered and translated to the emir.

The first said:

*O sons of men,
You add the future to the future
But your sum is spoiled
By the grey cipher of death.
There is a Master*

*Who breathes upon armies,
Building a narrow and dark house for kings.
These wake above their dust
In a black commonwealth.*

At these words, the emir Musa cried: "O sublime truth! O waking of the soul in the equality of earth! That strikes one to the heart!" When he had copied the words upon his parchments, the sheikh translated to him the second inscription, which said:

*O sons of men,
Why do you put your hands before your eyes
And play in this road as if for ever,
Which is a short passing to another place?
Where are the kings
Whose loins jetted empires,
Where are the very strong men,
Masters of Irak?
Where are the lords of Ispahan,
O sons of men?*

The emir Musa copied this inscription and, sore at heart, listened to the old man as he translated the third:

*O sons of men,
You see a stranger upon the road,
You call to him and he does not stop.
He is your life
Walking towards time,
Hurrying to meet the kings of India and China,
Hurrying to greet the sultans of Sina and Nubia,
Who were blown over the mountain crest
By a certain breath,
Even as he.*

The emir Musa cried: "Where are the sultans of Sina and Nubia? They are cast over into nothing!" The fourth inscription said:

*O sons of men,
Lean death perches upon your shoulder
Looking down into your cup of wine,
Looking down on the breasts of your lady.
You are caught in the web of the world
And the spider Nothing waits behind it.
Where are the men with towering hopes?
They have changed places with owls,
Owls who lived in tombs
And now inhabit a palace.*

The emir Musa could no longer contain his emotion but wept, holding his brow in his hands and saying to himself: "O mystery of birth and death! Why is a man born if he must die? Why live, if death brings forgetfulness of life? But Allah alone understands the purpose of our destiny; it is for us to bow before Him in silent obedience." After these reflections he went on with his companions towards the camp and ordered his soldiers to set to work at once on the construction of a long and solid ladder which would reach to the top of the walls and might be used as a means of descent into the gateless city.

At once the soldiers collected wood and the large dry branches of trees, cut and shaped these as well as they were able with their swords and knives, and bound them together with their turbans and belts, with the halters of the camels, and the leather of the equipments, until they had constructed a ladder tall enough to reach the top of the walls. They carried it to the most favourable position, propped it on all

sides with large stones, and then, after invoking the name of Allah, began to climb slowly, with the emir Musa leading them.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE EMIR MUSA, with his two companions and such of his soldiers as he had not left below to guard the camp, walked along the top of the wall for some time and at last came to two towers joined by a double door of brass so perfectly made that even the point of a needle could not have passed into the crack of it. On this door a golden rider was engraved in relief, with stretched out arm and open hand: upon the palm of the hand were to be seen some words traced in Ionian character, which the sheikh Abd Al-Samad deciphered and translated thus: "Twelve times rub the nail in my navel."

Surprised by these words, the emir Musa went up to the picture of the rider and saw that there was indeed a golden nail fixed in the very centre of his navel. Stretching up his hand, he began to rub this nail and, when his finger had passed over it the twelfth time, the two halves of the door opened fully, showing behind them a winding stair of red granite, which led downwards. Without hesitation, Musa and his party walked down this stair, which eventually led them into a hall, giving, at its own level, upon a street, where were stationed sentinels, armed with bows and

swords. "Let us go speak with them, that they may not interfere with us," said the emir Musa.

They went up to these guards, some of whom stood to attention with their shields upon their arms and their naked swords in their hands, and others of whom sat or lay at ease, and Musa, addressing himself to one who seemed to be a captain among them, courteously wished him peace. The man did not move or answer the greeting; the other sentinels remained motionless with fixed eyes, paying no attention at all to the new-comers.

Thinking that these soldiers did not understand Arabic, Musa said to Abd Al-Samad: "O sheikh, speak to them in all the languages which you know." The old man spoke to them first in Greek and then, seeing that this was useless, in the language of Hind, and afterwards in Hebrew, Persian, Ethiopian, and Soudanese. But none answered to these tongues or made any sign. Then said Musa: "Perhaps these soldiers are offended that you have not greeted them with the peculiar salute of their country. Try the gestures of greeting of all the countries which you know." The venerable Abd Al-Samad at once tried over all the polite movements used in the greetings of the peoples of all the lands which he had known; but none of the soldiers moved even for that.

In his astonishment, the emir Musa tried no further; but, bidding his companions follow him, walked along the street, puzzling his brains for the meaning of all this dumbness. "As Allah lives," said Abd Al-Samad to himself, "never in all my travels have I met with so extraordinary a circumstance!"

At last the travellers came to the entrance to the market and, finding all the doors open, walked into it. The place was filled with folk buying and selling and

the fronts of the shops were marvellously filled with merchandise; but the buyers and the sellers and all others in the market seemed, by common accord, to have halted in their movements as soon as they were seen, and appeared to be waiting for the departure of the strangers before going on with their business. They paid no attention to the new-comers and only expressed their displeasure at this intrusion by ignoring them. Amid a disdainful silence, the travellers walked on until they came to a great enclosed and vaulted market, where their footsteps echoed with a great noise because of the lack of all other sound. They walked through this building without exciting either welcoming or hostile movements or smiles; and in the same way visited the markets of the jewellers, silk merchants, saddlers, cloth merchants, cobblers, and sellers of spices and aromatic woods.

When they had passed through this last market, they came suddenly upon a great square of brass where the sun blinded their eyes which had before been soothed by the half-lights of the markets. At the other end of this square, between brass columns of prodigious height surmounted by golden animals with spread wings, rose a marble palace, flanked by brass towers and ringed round with armed, immovable guards, whose lances and swords burned everlastingly. A gate of gold gave entrance to the palace and through this the emir Musa ventured with his friends.

At first they saw a gallery supported by porphyry columns which ran the whole length of the building and enclosed a court refreshed with basins of coloured marble. This gallery seemed to be an arsenal, for there were fastened to all the columns and all the walls and to the ceiling admirable weapons of war,

marvellously enriched with precious stones, and taken from all the countries of the earth. Resting on ebony benches, wonderfully inlaid with gold and silver, sat or lay a host of warriors in their parade dresses; but not one of them made a movement to bar the progress of the new-comers or to prevent them from continuing their astonished exploration.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FOLLOWING THIS gallery, they saw that the higher part of it was ornamented with a heavily carved cornice, on the blue ground of which was engraved in letters of gold an inscription in the Ionian tongue, which the sheikh Abd Al-Samad faithfully translated thus:

*O sons of men,
Turn quickly and you will see death
Behind your shoulder.
Adam saw him;
Nimrod saw him,
Who wound his horn in the forest;
The masters of Persia saw him.
Alexander, who wrestled with the world
And threw the world,
Turned quickly and saw death
Behind his shoulder.
Hamam and Karum,*

*Shadad the son of Ad,
Turned and beheld him.
They were ordered to leave their places
And answer a question
Which the world could not ask.
O sons of men,
When you give yourselves to the sweet trap of life
Leave one limb free for God.
The fear of death is the beginning of wisdom
And the fair things you do
Shall blow and smell like flowers
On the red and fiery day.*

When they had written this moving inscription on their parchments, they opened a large door in the middle of the gallery and went through into a hall where a fountain of transparent marble threw its jet of water into the air. Above this fountain, there spread out as a ceiling of pleasing colour, a pavilion of silk and gold, whose shades were married with a perfect art. To come to the fountain basin, the water followed four canals, hollowed in the floor of the hall, with calculated meanderings. Each canal had a bed of different colour: the waters of the first flowed over a bed of rose porphyry, of the second over topazes, of the third over emeralds, and of the fourth over turquoises; so that the water in each case took the colour of its bed and, stricken by the altered light filtering through the silks above, threw on all things about its course and upon the walls of marble the fair appearance of the sea.

They went through a second door and entered a second hall, filled with old gold and silver monies, with jewels and pearls, with rubies and every precious stone, heaped into so frequent mounds that they had

difficulty in walking across the place and attaining a third hall which lay beyond.

This last was filled with warlike arms constructed of precious metals: gold shields bossed with deep coloured jewels, antique helmets, Indian swords, lances, javelins, and mail of the time of David and of Sulayman. All these weapons were in such a state of preservation that one would have said that they had come but the day before from the hands of their smiths.

They found a fourth hall filled with presses and shelves of rare woods, on which were carefully ordered rich clothes and sumptuous robes of costly silk and admirably worked brocade. Crossing this hall, they came into a fifth, which held from floor to ceiling nothing but vases and other utensils for eating, drinking, and ablution: there were gold and silver jars, basins of rock crystal, cups hollowed each from a single precious stone, with dishes of solid jade or different coloured agate.

When they had filled the admiration of their eyes with these things and were thinking of returning by the way they had come, it occurred to them to lift a mighty curtain of gold and silk which covered one of the walls of this last hall. Behind it they found a larger door than all, worked with fine inlay of ivory and ebony and fastened by locks of solid silver with no trace of room for a key. The sheikh Abd Al-Samad set to work to study the mechanism of these locks and at last found a hidden spring which gave beneath his pressure. Then the door opened of itself and gave free way to the travellers into a miraculous chamber hollowed inside a polished marble dome, which had the appearance of a steel mirror. By a trellis of emeralds and diamonds across the windows of this

place a shining white and green light filtered, which painted everything with its splendour. In the middle of the room, lifted on little gold pillars each surmounted by a bird with emerald feathers and a ruby beak, was a platform, spread with fabrics of silk and gold which fell from it down an ivory decline and, on the floor, mingled with a magnificently coloured carpet, where cunning looms had caused odourless flowers to flourish among sapless grass and had created all the lifeless life of a forest filled with birds and beasts caught in the exact beauty of their nature and of their rigorous lines.

The emir Musa and his friends climbed to this platform and were there stricken still in amazement. Under a velvet canopy starred with diamonds, there lay, on a large bed of silken carpets, a girl of flower-like colouring, her lids languid with sleep below curved brows. Her magic beauty was heightened by the gold crown which checked the play of her hair and by a moist collar of pearls which kissed her golden skin. To right and left of the bed stood two slaves, one white and the other black, armed each with a naked sword and a steel pike. At the foot of the bed was to be seen a strip of marble on which these words were engraved:

I am Tadmur, Princess of the Amalekites. This city is my city. O you, who have come so far, take all which pleases you; but oh, beware! if my beauty and your lust draw you to lay a violating hand on me!"

When the emir Musa had recovered from the emotion caused in him by the sleeping girl, he said to his companions: "It is time now that we left these places, for we have seen all astonishing things, and it is our duty to go towards the sea to find those copper

jars. You may take from this palace anything which attracts you, but beware of setting hand to this king's daughter or touching even so much as her garment."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID TALIB BIN SAHL: "O emir, nothing in this palace can compare for beauty with this young girl. It would be a pity not to take her to Damascus and offer her to the khalifat. He would prefer such a gift to all the jars of Ifrits in the world." "We must not touch the princess," answered Musa. "To touch her would be to offend her and to draw down calamities upon ourselves." But Talib answered: "O emir, princesses do not mind that sort of violence, whether they are awake or asleep." So saying, he approached the girl and would have lifted her in his arms, when he fell dead, pierced by the swords and pikes of the two slaves, through the heart and through the head.

Seeing this, the emir Musa would not stay for a moment longer in that palace; but, leaving the city with his companions, hastened along the road towards the sea. When they came to the shore they saw a great many black men occupied in drying their nets and these men answered their greetings in Arabic, according to Mussulman usage. The emir Musa said to the eldest among them, who appeared to be their chief: "Venerable old man, we come on behalf of our master the khalifat, Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan, to

search this sea for jars containing Ifrits of the time of the prophet Sulayman. Can you help us in our quest and explain to us the mystery of the city, where all the people are motionless?" The old man answered: "My son, all we fishermen upon this shore are Believers in the word of Allah and of his Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!), but the inhabitants of the City of Brass have been enchanted since old time and will stay as they are until the Judgment Day. Nothing is easier than for you to gain possession of those jars of Ifrits, for we have a great number of them, which we use for cooking our fish once they have been unsealed. We can give you as many as you like; only, I warn you, it is necessary to slap the jars with your hand before unsealing them and to extract an oath from those within that they will acknowledge the truth of the mission of our Prophet, Muhamad, to atone for their first fault and rebellion against the supremacy of Sulayman, son of David. . . . We shall also be pleased to give you, as a proof of our fidelity to the master of all, the Commander of the Faithful, two Daughters of the Sea, whom we have caught today and who are more beautiful than all human women.

So saying, the old man handed over to the emir Musa twelve copper jars, lead-sealed with the seal of Sulayman, and the two Daughters of the Sea, miraculous creatures, with long hair combing like waves, with faces of moonlight, and round breasts as hard as the pebbles of the ocean. From their navels down they lacked the fleshy beauties which are so attractive in the daughters of men, but had there instead fish bodies which they moved to right and left as other women move their thighs when they see that men are watching their walking. Their voices were sweet

and their smiles most pleasing, but they could neither speak nor understand any known language and answered all questions put to them with the laughter of their eyes.

The emir Musa and his companions thanked the old man for his generosity and invited him, and all the other fishermen, to leave that country and journey with the caravan to Damascus, city of flowers, of fruits, and of sweet waters. The fishermen accepted this offer and the whole party first visited the City of Brass, where they possessed themselves of all which they could carry of gold, jewels, and things light to carry but of heavy price. Thus burdened, they came down from the brass walls, filled their sacks and provision cases with their booty, and took the road to Damascus, where they arrived after a long and uneventful journey.

The khalifat, Abd Al-Malik, marvelled delightedly at the story which the emir Musa told him. When he had heard it, he cried: "I regret that I was not with you in the City of Brass, but, with the leave of Allah, I will go there myself soon, to see these marvels and try to unravel the mystery of that enchantment." After that he opened the twelve copper jars with his own hand, and, each time, a thick smoke welled out, which changed into a terrible Ifrit, who threw himself at the feet of the khalifat, crying: "I ask pardon, from Allah and from you, for my rebellion, O Sulayman, Master!" and then disappeared through the ceiling, to the great surprise of all who were present.

The khalifat marvelled no less at the beauty of the two Daughters of the Sea: their smiles, their voices, and their unknown tongue touched his heart and moved him to generosity. He placed them in a foun-

tain basin, where they lived for some time and then died of consumption and the excessive heat.

The emir Musa obtained leave from the khalifat to retire to holy Jerusalem, there to pass the rest of his days in meditation upon the ancient inscriptions which he had copied so carefully on his parchments. He died in that city, after having lived as an object of veneration to all Believers; they still go to visit the tomb where he rests in the peace and benediction of Allah.

Such, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, is the tale of the City of Brass.

"A truly extraordinary tale, O Shahrazade!" said King Shahryar. "I think so, O King," she continued, "but I should not like this night to pass without telling you an altogether charming adventure which happened to Ibn Al-Mansur." "Who is Ibn Al-Mansur? I do not know him," cried the astonished king. Then Shahrazade with a smile said: "Listen!"

THE STORY OF IBN AL-MAN- SUR AND THE TWO GIRLS

YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD, O auspicious King, that the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, used to suffer from frequent lack of sleep caused by the cares of his kingdom. One night, as he turned from side to side upon his bed and could not fall asleep, he grew weary of the useless trying and therefore kicked his coverings away and, clapping his hands for Masrur, the sword-bearer, who watched each night at his door, said to him: "Masrur, find me some distraction, as I cannot sleep." "My lord," answered Masrur, "there is nothing like walking in the night for calming the spirit

and making a man drowsy. Outside the night is beautiful in the garden; let us go down among the trees, among the flowers; we will look at the stars in their magnificent incrustation and admire the fairness of the moon as she advances among them and comes down to bathe herself in the waters of the river." "Masrur," said the khalifat, "I do not wish to see these things tonight." "My lord," continued the sword-bearer, "you have in the palace three hundred secret women, each owning a pavilion of her own. Let me go and warn them to be ready; then you can come behind the curtains of each pavilion and, without betraying your presence, admire the simple beauties of each." "Masrur," said the khalifat, "this palace is my palace, and these young women are mine, but tonight my soul has no desire for them." "My lord," went on the other, "let me assemble before you the learned men, the sages, the poets of Baghdad: the sages will rejoice you with their polished sentences, the learned with the discoveries which they have lately made in the annals, and the poets with the genius of their rhythmmed verse." "Masrur," said the khalifat, "tonight my soul wishes for none of these things." "My lord," continued Masrur, "there are delightful cupbearers and charming youths within the palace; shall I order them to bear you company?" "Masrur," said the khalifat, "my soul will have none of them." Then said Masrur: "My lord, why not cut off my head? Perhaps that is the only way by which you can be cured of your melancholy."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AL-RACHID LAUGHED HEARTILY at this, and then said: "Well, Masrur, perhaps it will come to that some day; but, for the present, go into the entrance hall and see if anyone remains there whom it would be pleasant for me to see and hear."

Masrur went out, and presently returned, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, I can find no one except that old rascal, Ibn Al-Mansur." "What Ibn Al-Mansur?" asked the khalifat, "Do you mean Ibn Al-Mansur of Damascus?" "Indeed, it is that malicious old man, my lord," said the chief eunuch. "Bring him in quickly!" said Al-Rachid, and at once Masrur introduced Al-Mansur, who said: "A blessing be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful!" The khalifat returned his greeting, saying: "O Ibn Al-Mansur, let me hear one of your adventures." "Prince of Believers," answered the other, "shall I tell of a thing which I have seen myself or one of which I have merely heard?" "If you have yourself seen some very astonishing thing," said the khalifat, "tell me of it forthwith; for things seen are more interesting than things heard." "Then Commander of the Faithful," said Al-Mansur, "give me your ear and a sympathetic hearing." "Ibn Al-Mansur, I have a ready ear, a ready eye, and a ready heart," answered the khalifat; so Ibn Al-Mansur said:

Prince of Believers, you must know that every year I go to Bassora, to pass a few days with the emir Muhamad Al-Hashami, your lieutenant in that city. One year, on arriving at the palace, I saw the emir

about to mount his horse to go out upon a hunt. When he saw me, he welcomed me and invited me to go with him; but I said: "Excuse me, my lord, but the very sight of a horse interferes with my digestion and it is all I can do to remain upon an ass. I could hardly go hunting upon an ass." Accepting my excuse, the emir Muhamad put his palace at my disposal and commanded his officers to treat me with all honour and see that I lacked for nothing until his return; instructions which they carried out to the letter.

When he had gone, I said to myself: "As Allah lives, Ibn Al-Mansur, year after year you have come regularly to Bassora, and until today you have been content to go from the palace to the garden and from the garden to the palace without seeing any more of the city. You will never learn anything of the place in this way; come now, while you have such leisure, try to find something interesting in the streets of Bassora. The walking will help your digestion and it needs helping; you are getting fat and swelling like a water-skin." I obeyed this despairing cry of my soul, which was like to be smothered under so much grease and, putting on my most costly robes, left the palace and wandered here and there at haphazard.

Now you must know, Prince of Believers, that, in Bassora, there are seventy distinct streets, and that each street is seventy Irak parasangs in length. It is not surprising then, that, after a short time, I found myself quite lost among so many streets, and, in my perplexity, began to move more and more quickly, not daring to ask my way for fear of being made a laughing-stock. I sweated wonderfully, I grew very thirsty indeed, and I became certain that the terrible sun would melt every atom of fat about my body.

I dived down the first side-street I came to, search-

ing for a little shade, and soon found myself in a blind alley, stopped by the entrance of a very great and beautiful house. This entrance, which was half hidden by a red silk curtain, gave upon a large garden which lay in front of the house; on each side of it stood a marble bench, shaded by the leaves of a climbing vine; and on one of these I sat down to get my breath.

As I wiped my forehead and puffed in the heat, I heard the voice of a woman in the garden singing these words to a plaintive air:

*When the wild deer fled from the cave of my heart,
Sorrow crept into the vacant lair.*

*Why should he leave me, why reprove me?
I used no art
Of lips or hair
To make the maidens love me.*

The voice was so beautiful and the words so mysterious, that I said to myself: "If the woman is as beautiful as her song leads me to believe, she must be indeed a marvellous creature!" I rose, and, approaching the entrance, gently lifted the curtain a little way, so that I might see without being seen. In the middle of the garden, I beheld two girls of extraordinary beauty, one evidently the mistress and one the slave. It was the mistress who sang and she was the more beautiful; the slave accompanied her upon a lute. I might have been excused for thinking that I saw the moon upon her fourteenth night coming down into the garden. I recalled these lines of the poet:

*A little wicked city of Babylon
Burns in each of her eyes,
The lights and swords and flowers of Babylon.*

*Over her neck of jasmin ivory
Falls her hair's ebonies,
Night come visiting jasmin ivory.*

*Are they breasts of white flesh tenderly rounded
Or hand-soft ivories
Or fruit like white flesh tenderly rounded?*

White sand moving or moving thighs?

And also these lines:

*Two petals of narcissus close her eyes,
Yet they are large enough
To hold the dawn.
Also, the lips I love
Are sealed with molten
Rose rubies and her dress
Is wavering and golden.
Below it
Half withdrawn
A garden plot of paradise
Wind-nods for ever. Poet,
You languishing through the hours,
You cannot guess
The colour of the flowers.
I know it.*

Prince of Believers, I could not prevent myself from exclaiming: "Ya Allah, Ya Allah!" and stood stock still, eating and drinking with my eyes. The girl turning her head in my direction, saw me and quickly lowered the little veil before her face; then, with every sign of indignation, she sent the small slave, the lute player, running towards me, who said

to me: "O sheikh, are you not ashamed to look so at women in their own house? Do not your great age and your white beard counsel you to observe the proprieties?" I answered in a loud voice, so that the seated girl might hear me: "To a certain extent you are right, my mistress. My great age is a bye-word, but as for my shame, that is another matter."

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE GIRL HEARD my answer, she rose and, coming over to her slave, who stood by me, said angrily: "Could there be a greater shame upon your white hairs, O sheikh, than the impudence of stopping at the door of a harem which is not your harem, and of a house which is not your house?" I bowed and answered: "As Allah lives, my mistress, the shame upon my beard is not very great, for my intrusion has its excuse." "And what excuse is that?" she asked. I answered: "I am a stranger, driven almost to death by excessive thirst." "As Allah lives, we accept your excuse; for it is a good one," answered the girl; and with that she turned to the slave, murmuring: "Gentle one, run and bring him something to drink."

The child departed and returned in a moment, bearing a gold cup upon a platter and a little green silk napkin; she offered me the cup, which was full of

clear water, agreeably perfumed with fresh musk, and, taking it, I began to drink very slowly, at the same time sending sidelong glances of admiration at the mistress and open grateful looks at both. After some time of this play, I handed the cup back to the young girl, who then gave me the napkin and invited me to wipe my mouth with it. It was deliciously perfumed with sandal; I used it, returned it, and stayed where I was, without offering to depart.

When the beautiful girl considered that my stay had passed the bounds of propriety, she said, in a troubled voice: "O sheikh, why do you not seek your way upon the road of Allah?" "Mistress," I answered in a dreamy voice, "there are thoughts which occupy my soul and reflections encompassing it which I cannot make clear to myself." "What reflections are those?" she asked; and I replied: "My mistress, I am reflecting upon the other side of things and the march of those happenings which are the fruit of time." "Indeed, those are heavy thoughts," she said, "we all have to bewail some evil trick of time; but tell me, O sheikh, what has caused you to ponder in this fashion at the entrance of our house?" "I was thinking of the master of the house," I answered. "Now, I remember him well. He used to tell me that he lived in this bye-street, in a house standing alone in its garden. As Allah lives, the owner of this house used to be my best friend." "Then you ought to be able to remember the name of your friend," she said. "I do," I replied, "he was called Ali bin Muhamad, and he was the greatly-respected syndic of all the jewellers in Bassora. It is years since I lost sight of him and I fear that he must now have passed into the mercy of Allah. Allow me to ask you if he left any children?"

The girl's eyes filled with tears at my words, and she said: "The peace and love of Allah be upon the syndic Ali bin Muhamad! Since you were his friend, I will tell you, O sheikh, that he left one daughter called Budur and that she is the sole heir to his great riches." "As Allah lives," I cried, "the daughter of my old friend could be none other than yourself!" "You have guessed right," she answered with a smile, and I said: "May Allah multiply His blessings upon you, O daughter of Ali bin Muhamad! Now, it seems to me, as far as I can see through the silken heaviness of your veil, O moon, that your face is very sad. Do not fear to tell me the reason of your grief; for, perhaps, Allah has sent me to you to remove the sorrow which sits so heavily upon your beauty." "But how can I tell you of such intimate things," she asked, "when I know neither your name nor your quality?" I bowed and answered: "Your slave, Madam, is Ibn Al-Mansur of Damascus, one whom your master, the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, honours with his friendship and delights to call companion."

Hardly had I pronounced these words, O Prince of Believers, when the lady Budur said: "Be very welcome to my house, Ibn Al-Mansur. I beg you to use our hospitality largely and as a friend." With that she invited me to accompany her and made me sit down in the reception hall.

When we were all three seated in this hall, which lay at the bottom of the garden, and had partaken of the usual refreshments, which were of an exquisite quality, Budur said to me: "Since you wish to know the reason of the grief which you have discovered in my face, first faithfully promise to keep that which I have to say a secret." "Mistress," I answered, "a secret in my heart is as good as enclosed in a steel

box whose key is lost." "Then listen to my tale," she said; and, when the delightful little slave had offered me a further spoonful of rose jam, Budur began:

"I am in love and my lover is far from me. That is the whole story!"

With that Budur sighed and fell silent; and I said: "You have been given perfect beauty and therefore the man you love must surely have perfect beauty also. What is his name?" "As you have said, Ibn Al-Mansur," she answered, "my lover has perfect beauty; he is the emir Jubayr bin Umayr, transcendently the fairest youth in all Bassora and Irak." "He could hardly be otherwise, my mistress," said I. "Come, tell me, was your love together in words only; or had it gone as far as long rich intimate proofs?" "Indeed, the proofs were long enough," she said, "if length of time could fasten hearts together. But the emir Jubayr was unfaithful to me, simply on suspicion."

At these words, O Commander of the Faithful, I cried out: "Alas, who dares suspect the lily of loving the mud because the breeze bends her towards the earth? Even if his suspicions had been well founded, your beauty would be excuse enough for all." She smiled and continued: "Even if it had been the question of some man! But the emir accused me of loving a girl, this sweet and gentle little thing whom you can see for yourself." "I ask Allah's pardon for the emir!" I cried. "May the Devil be confounded! How can two women love each other? At least tell me on what the emir founded his suspicions." She answered:

"One day, when I had taken my bath in the hammam of the house and was stretched on my couch

under the hands of this faithful slave, who was attending to the cares of my toilet and combing my hair, the heat was so great that the child, to give me cool, slipped the great towels from my shoulders and my breast and began to arrange my tresses. When she had finished, she looked at me and, finding me beautiful, threw her arms about my neck and kissed me upon the cheek, saying: 'O mistress, I wish I were a man, that I could love you even more than I do now!' Then the pleasant child tried to amuse me with a thousand loving games. In the middle of these, the emir entered; he threw a strange look towards both of us and precipitately retired, sending me, a few minutes later, a note, on which these words were written: 'Only that love which is not shared can bring us happiness.' Since that time I have not seen him and he has never sent me news of himself, O Ibn Al-Mansur."

"Were you bound by a marriage-contract?" I asked, and she replied: "What was a contract to us? We were bound together by our wills, without the meddling of any kadi or witnesses." "Then, if you will allow me," I said, "I shall be pleased to attempt to re-unite you, simply for the pleasure of knowing that two fine creatures have come together again." "Blessed be Allah, who set you in our way, old man of so auspicious face!" she cried. "Do not think that you are doing this favour to one who is forgetful of kindness. I will at once write a letter with my own hand to the emir Jubayr; and you can give it to him with such words of your own as may make him listen to reason." Then to her favourite she said: "Gentle one, bring me ink and a sheet of paper." When these were brought the lady Budur wrote:

"Beloved, why is our separation for so long time? Grief has driven the sleep from my eyes and when your face appears to me in dreams I hardly recognise it, for it is so changed.

"Tell me, why have you left the door open to those who speak evil of me? Rise up, shake off the dust of suspicion, and come back to me! Oh, how that day which sees us reconciled will be white and blessed before our eyes for ever!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HAD FINISHED this letter, she folded, sealed, and gave it to me, at the same time slipping into my pocket a purse of a thousand golden dinars, without giving me a chance of preventing her. This last I decided to keep in memory of the good offices I had performed in other days towards her dead father, the worthy syndic, and also as a provision for the future. I took leave of the lady Budur and went at once to the house of Jubayr bin Umayr, whose dead father I had also known.

When I arrived at his palace, they told me that he was out hunting and I sat down to wait his return. In a short time he came back and, when he had learnt my name and condition, begged me to accept his hospitality and sent word to say that I must consider his dwelling as my own. Presently, too, he came to welcome me in person.

O Commander of the Faithful, when I saw the finished beauty of this young man, I was stricken dumb and felt my reason finally forsake her throne. Noticing that I did not move, he thought that I was held back by timidity, so he came towards me smiling and embraced me: I embraced him and felt as I did so that I was clasping the sun, the moon, and the whole universe, with all which it contains. As it was time for a meal, the emir Jubayr took me by the arm and made me sit beside him upon a mattress, while slaves spread a cloth before us.

This was covered with gold and silver plate of Khorasan; and the plate, in turn, with every kind of fried or roasted meat which the palate, the nose, and the eyes, could appreciate or desire. Among other excellent things, there were birds stuffed with pistachios and grapes, tender fishes couched upon hot breads, and, more especially, a purslane salad which filled my mouth with greedy water. I shall say nothing of the rest, and yet I must just mention a marvelous rice with buffalo cream, into which I would willingly have plunged my arm up to the elbow, and a carrot jam with nuts, a confection I adore. Oh, one of these days it will be the death of me! Also there were fruits and drinks.

And yet I swear by the nobility of your ancestors, O Commander of the Faithful, that I repressed the solicitations of my soul and did not eat a mouthful. Instead, I waited for my host to invite me to stretch out my hand, and then I said: "As Allah lives, I have made a vow not to touch any of the meats of your hospitality, O emir Jubayr, until you have granted me the prayer which I came here to make." "O guest," he answered, "at least let me know what the prayer is before I engage myself in a matter so

grave that it might result in your renouncing my hospitality." For answer, I took the letter from my bosom and handed it to him.

He received it, opened it and read it; then he tore it up, threw the pieces upon the ground, and stamped on them; finally he said: "O Ibn Al-Mansur, ask what you will and it shall be granted upon the instant; but do not speak about this letter, for I have no answer to give either to it or to you."

I rose and wished to depart; but he held me back by the garments, begging me to remain, and saying: "O guest, if you knew the reason of my refusal you would insist no further. Do not believe that you are the first who has been sent upon this mission. If you wish, I will tell you the exact words which she charged you to repeat to me." With that he reproduced the very sentences, as if he had been present when they had been spoken. "Take my advice," he said, "and do not concern yourself in this matter, but stay and rest in my house for as long as your soul desires."

These words decided me to remain; I passed the rest of the day and all the evening in eating, drinking, and talking with the emir Jubayr. All that time, I was astonished to hear no sound of singing or of music, though these things are the accepted accompaniment of every feast. At last I decided to give expression to my surprise; when I had done so, I saw the young man's face grow dark and his whole aspect become uncomfortable. "For a long time I have suppressed all singing and music at my feasts," he said, "but if you desire such things, you shall have them." At once he commanded, and one of his slaves came forward with an Indian lute wrapped in a satin case. She sat before us and, after prelud-

ing in twenty-one different tones, sang the following:

*The moaning daughters of fate
Weep with troubled hair
Over the fountain, the roses, and the wine,
Over the roasted meats and the narcissus budding
and breaking.
When will the poppied cate
Of the year's making
Beguile
This heart of mine
To smile
Over the ordered rare
Fountain, roses, and wine,
Roasted meats and narcissus budding and breaking?*

Then, to a more mournful melody, she sang:

*There is a drink of honey and aloes,
Have you not sipped it yet?
There is a torture which pleases,
Have you not felt it?
A mouth which refreshes and teases,
Have you not lipped it?
And a rose which burns in the darkness,
Have you not smelt it yet?*

Hardly had the singer let the last words of this complaint die upon the air than I saw my young host fall back fainting with an unhappy cry. "This is your fault, O sheikh," the slave said to me. "For a long time now we have avoided singing before him because of the agitation and emotion which every love song causes him." I bitterly regretted bringing this trouble upon my host and, at the slave's invita-

tion, retired to my own room that I might disturb him no more with my presence.

Next day, just as I was getting ready to leave and was begging one of the slaves to carry my thanks to his master, a servant came to me bearing a purse of a thousand dinars from the emir, with a message of farewell, and a prayer that I should accept the purse for the inconvenience to which I had been put. Thus, although I had not succeeded in my part of ambassador, I left the dwelling of Jubayr and returned to her who had sent me.

Coming to the garden, I found the lady Budur waiting for me at the door; without giving me time to open my mouth, she said: "O Ibn Al-Mansur, I know that you have not succeeded in your mission." Then she gave me so exact an account, word for word, of all which had passed between myself and the emir Jubayr, that I could not help thinking that she must have spies in her pay to inform her of anything which happened at all concerning her. "How is it that you know these things so well?" I asked. "Were you hidden somewhere when I spoke to him?" "O Al-Mansur," she replied, "the hearts of lovers are eyes which see that which is hidden. The refusal which you met was my destiny and not your fault." Then, lifting her eyes to heaven, she continued: "O Master of hearts, Lord of souls, make me to be loved without loving! Turn all the love which stays in this heart for Jubayr, into his own heart to torment him! Make him return to me a suppliant and I not heed him!" After that she thanked me for my good intentions and dismissed me. I returned to the palace of the emir Muhamad and thence to Baghdad.

The following year I went again to Bassora on business, as was my custom; for I must tell you, O

Commander of the Faithful, that the emir Muhamad was in my debt and only by these regular visits could I make him pay. On the morning after my arrival, I said to myself: "As Allah lives, I must learn what has happened in the story of those two lovers." With this object I walked at once to the lady Budur's house.

I found the door of the garden shut and a silence everywhere which weighed upon my soul. Looking through the grill of the door, I saw a tomb of new marble beneath the branches of a weeping willow in the middle of one of the alleys; but I was too far off to be able to read the inscription upon it. "She is no more," I said to myself. "Her youth has been cut down. Alas, that such beauty should be for ever lost! Surely grief crushed her down and broke her heart!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

STRICKEN WITH AN AGONY of sorrow, I made my way to the palace of the emir Jubayr, where an even sadder sight met my eyes. All was deserted, the walls had fallen into ruin, the garden was dry and uncared for, the door was unguarded, and no living soul seemed to remain to tell me of the fate of those who had lived there. Thinking to myself: "He also is dead," I sat down at the door and improvised these lines:

*Even the threshold brought tears to my eyes.
Where is the Prince of Hospitalities,*

*Where are the joyful guests who sat with him?
The spider questions and the wind replies.*

As I was thus giving expression to my grief, a black slave appeared before me, and said violently: "Be silent, old man! May you die suddenly! Why do you say such lamentable things at our door?" "I was simply improvising some lines to the memory of one of my friends," I answered. "He used to live in this house and his name was Jubayr bin Umayr." Then said the slave: "Allah's name be upon him and about him! Pray for the Prophet, old man! Why do you say that the emir Jubayr is dead, when, thanks be to Allah, he still lives, rich and honoured among us?" "Then why this desolation of the house and garden?" I cried. "Because of love," he answered; "the emir Jubayr is alive, it is true, but he is little better than one dead, for he lies motionless upon his bed: when he hungers, he does not say: 'Bring me food!' and when he thirsts, he does not say: 'Bring me drink!'"

When the negro said this, I exclaimed: "In Allah's name go quickly, white auspicious face, and tell him that I wish to see him. Say that Ibn Al-Mansur waits at his door." The slave departed and returned in a short time to say that there was no difficulty in my seeing his master. As I was going in with him, he whispered to me: "I warn you that he will hear nothing of what you say unless you know some word or words to touch him."

I found the emir Jubayr stretched upon his couch, his face thin, pale, and hardly recognisable; his glance lost in vacancy. I greeted him, but he did not return my greeting; I spoke to him, but he did not answer. "He understands nothing but verse," whispered the

slave in my ear. I asked for no better; but, after a moment's reflection, improvised this stanza in a distinct voice:

*Still Budur puts your tortured soul to school,
Or have your waking eyes forgot her rule,
Or are your nights still full of sleeplessness,
Sweet fool, sweet fool, but none the less a fool?*

Hearing these lines he opened his eyes, saying: "Be welcome, Ibn Al-Mansur. Things have taken a serious turn with me." "Can I be of any use to you, my lord?" I asked; and he answered: "You alone can save me. I would send a letter by you to the lady Budur, for you alone can persuade her to answer me." "Upon my head be it!" I returned; and at once, regaining his strength, the emir sat up, spread a sheet of paper upon the palm of his hand and, taking a pen, wrote the following:

"Hard love, I have gone mad, I am drowned deep in despair. I used to think love a foolish, light, and easy thing; but now, alas, wrecked on his waves, I own him to be a most terrible sea. I come back to you with a wounded heart, begging pardon for the past. Have pity upon me, and remember that once we loved. If you wish my death, you have but to be ungenerous."

He sealed this letter and gave it to me; although I was ignorant of what had happened to the lady Budur, I did not hesitate to take it. Walking to the garden, I crossed the court and entered the reception hall without announcement.

Picture my surprise when I saw ten young white slaves sitting upon carpets, and, in the midst of them, the lady Budur like a pure sun, in full life and health, but clothed in mourning garments. I bowed before

her, wishing her peace; and she, who had smiled on me as soon as I came in, answered my salute, saying: "Be welcome, Ibn Al-Mansur; sit down, the house is yours!" Then said I: "May all misfortune be far from this place, my mistress! Why do you wear a mourning garment?" "Do not ask me, Ibn Al-Mansur," she replied. "My gentle one is dead; you can see the tomb where she sleeps in the garden." With that she burst into tears and the slaves about her tried to comfort her.

At first I thought it my duty to keep silence; but at last I said: "May Allah sustain her in His mercy! May all of life which was owed to that young girl, that sweet favourite for whom you weep, be added to your share, my lady; for it is she who is dead." "It is she, poor thing," said the lady Budur.

Taking advantage of the woman's softened state, I drew the letter from my belt and gave it to her, saying: "Life or death hangs upon your answer; for the hope of a reply is all which binds the poor young man to life." After she had read the letter with a smile she said: "Is he now so far gone in passion who would not even read my letters of last year? I knew it would be sufficient to keep silence and employ disdain, if I wanted him to come back hotter than ever in his love for me!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"YOU ARE RIGHT," I answered, "you would even

be justified in speaking more bitterly of him; but forgiveness is an ornament of the soul. What would you do alone in this palace with grief, now that your gentle and consoling friend is dead?" I saw her eyes fill with tears when I said this and, for a whole hour she sat dreaming before she answered: "I think you are right, Al-Mansur; I will send a reply to him."

Then, Commander of the Faithful, she took paper and wrote a letter which the finest scribes in your palace could not have equalled for moving eloquence. I do not remember the exact terms of it, but this was the substance:

"O lover, I never could understand the reason of our separation, though I wished to do so. It is possible that I was guilty in the past, but the past is now no longer and jealousy should die with the dead.

"Let me have you beneath my eyelids to rest my eyes more sweetly than sleep.

"We will drink that cup again which cures all thirst; and, if we get drunk, there will be none to blame us."

When she had sealed it, I received this letter from her hands, and said to her: "As Allah lives, this will quench his thirst and cure his evil!" I was about to take my leave and carry the good news to him who was waiting it, when she stopped me for a moment, saying: "Ibn Al-Mansur, you may also say that to-night will be a night from paradise." Full of joy, I ran to the emir's palace and found him with his eyes fixed on the door by which he knew I would enter.

When he had read the letter and taken in its meaning, he uttered a great joyful cry and fainted. Soon he came to himself and anxiously asked me if the lady

Budur had written the letter with her own hand. "As Allah lives, she does not do that sort of thing with her foot!" I answered.

Hardly had I spoken these words, O Commander of the Faithful, when we heard from behind the door a clinking of bracelets, a tinkling of bells, and a rustling of silk; a moment afterwards the girl stood before us.

My words could not paint such an excess of joy worthily and therefore I will not try. I will only say that the two lovers ran towards each other and embraced long and long with mouth to silent mouth.

When they came out a little from their ecstasy, the lady Budur refused to sit down, although her lover begged her to do so. This astonished me and I asked the reason. "I will only sit down when our compact has been made," she said. "What compact is that?" I asked; and she answered: "One which concerns lovers only." So saying, she leaned down and whispered in her lover's ear. To whatever it was she said, he answered: "I hear and I obey!" and, calling one of his slaves, gave him an order and dismissed him.

Soon afterwards, I saw the kadi enter the chamber with witnesses; they drew up the marriage-contract of these two young people and then departed with a present of a thousand dinars which the lady Budur gave to them. I also would have retired, but the emir prevented me, saying: "It shall never be said that you shared our griefs and did not share our happiness." They entertained me with a feast till dawn and then allowed me to retire to the room which they had set apart for me.

In the morning, when I woke, a little slave brought me a basin and ewer. After I had made my ablutions and my prayer, I sat in the reception hall and presently the married couple came to me, fresh from

the hammam after their loves. I wished them a happy morning and complimented them upon their joys adding: "I am delighted to have had a certain part in your re-union; but, as Allah lives, if you wish, O emir Jubayr, to show me a kindness for what I have done, explain to me what it was which angered you so in time past that you separated from the lady Budur. She has told me of the occasion when the little slave embraced and played with her after combing her hair, but I cannot imagine that that would have been enough to move you so, if you had not had some other reason for suspicion."

The emir Jubayr smiled, saying: "You are very wise, O Ibn Al-Mansur. Now that the lady Budur's favourite is dead, my resentment is dead also, and I can tell you the beginnings of our misunderstanding. The whole thing started with a jest which was reported to me as having been said between the two of them by a boatman, who once took them for a river trip. 'My lord,' he said to me, 'how can you bear to have a wife who mocks you with a favourite slave whom she loves? When they were in my boat, they sat in each other's arms and sang most disturbing things about the love of men; they even sang this:

*All that I have of hot
Grows cold,
For he is not
That which he was of old.
These days, however deep
I use my art,
There is a change from part to part.
His heart is hard, but elsewhere he's asleep.'*

"When the boatman said this, the world turned

dark before my eyes; I hurried to the lady Budur's house and there I saw that which I saw. Thus were my suspicions confirmed; but, thanks to Allah, all that is now forgotten!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE BEGGED ME to accept three thousand dinars as a proof of his gratitude for my happy intervention. I multiplied my good wishes. . . .

Here Ibn Al-Mansur suddenly halted in his story, interrupted by a snore. The khalifat was sleeping deeply, wooed by the drowsiness which the tale had heaped upon him. Fearing to wake him, Ibn Al-Mansur slipped quietly away by the door which the chief eunuch even more quietly opened for him.

Shahrazade fell silent for a moment and then looked at King Shahryar, saying: "In truth, O auspicious King, I am astonished that the tale has not brought you sleep also." Then said King Shahryar: "Not at all; you are quite mistaken, Shahrazade; I did not wish to sleep tonight, and have a care, for, if you do not at once tell me some instructive tale, I will remember Al-Rachid's threat to Masrur. Now could you not say a few words, for instance, concerning suitable cures for women who torment their husbands with fleshly desire and thus open the door of the tomb for them."

Shahrazade reflected for a moment, and then said:

"O auspicious King, one of the tales which I remember best happens to deal with that very subject. I will tell it to you at once."

And Shahrazade told:

THE TALE OF WARDAN THE BUTCHER & THE WAZIR'S DAUGHTER

AMONG OTHER RELATIONS it is told that there was once in Cairo a man named Wardan who was, by profession, a mutton butcher. Every day a girl of magnificent face and form, but with very tired eyes and pale complexion, would come to his shop, followed by a porter charged with a basket, and, after choosing a portion of the choicest meat that he had and also some ram's eggs, would pay for them with a piece of gold weighing more than two dinars. When the meat was stowed in the basket, she would go in turn to all the other shops in the market, buying something from each of the merchants. She continued this daily practice so long that, at last, Wardan the butcher, having become very curious concerning the appearance and silence and habits of this youthful purchaser, resolved to search out the mystery and thus leave his mind free for other speculations.

He found the opportunity which he was looking for when the young woman's porter passed the shop alone. Wardan called him in, placed a prime sheep's head in his hand, and said: "O porter, tell the cook not to overdo this head or it will lose its savour . . . I am very perplexed concerning the girl who employs you every day. Who is she? Where does she come from? What does she do with the ram's eggs? Why are her eyes and face always so tired?" "As Allah lives," replied the other, "I am as anxious as you are

to know the answers to these questions. But what little I know I will tell you, as you stretch forth so generous a hand towards the poor. . . . As soon as all her other purchases are made, my mistress goes to the Christian merchant at the corner and buys a dinar's worth or more of rare old wine; then she leads me up to the entrance of the grand-wazir's gardens. There she binds my eyes with her veil, takes me by the hand, and leads me to some stair; we go down this together, my basket is taken from my hand, I am given a half-dinar and an empty basket in place of the full one, then, still with my eyes bandaged, I am led back to the gate of the garden and dismissed until the next day. I have never been able to find out what she does with all the meat and fruit, almonds, candles and the like, which she makes me carry to the bottom of that subterranean stair." "You have but added to my perplexity, O porter," said Wardan; and then, as other customers were approaching the shop, he dismissed the porter and began to serve them.

When, next day, after a night passed in consideration of the problem, he saw the girl and the porter coming to his shop at their usual hour, he said to himself: "As Allah lives, whatever happens I must know what I wish to know today!" As soon as the girl had passed by with her purchases, he left his boy in charge of the shop, and began secretly to follow her in such a way that he could not be noticed. He walked after her to the entrance of the wazir's gardens, and hid behind the trees there until he saw the porter returning with bandaged eyes, being led by the hand through the alleys of the gardens. When the man had been dismissed and had moved out of sight, Wardan rose from his hiding place and followed the girl with naked feet, using all available

cover of the trees. Thus he was able to observe her pause before a slab of rock, push it in a certain way so that it turned upon itself, and disappeared by a stairway which led down into the earth. Waiting for a few moments to give her time to descend, he went up to the rock and, manipulating it as she had done, succeeded in making it open. Then he descended the stairs, after having pushed the rock back into its place, and this, in his own words, is what he saw:

At first I could distinguish nothing because of the darkness, but at length I saw light filtering from some opening at the end of a corridor; holding my breath, and walking on tiptoe, I went towards the light and came to a door, from behind which I could hear many strange noises. Putting my eye to the crack by which the light was admitted into the corridor, I saw upon a couch the girl I had been following and an enormous ape with an almost human face. After a moment or so, the girl stood upright and removed her clothes. Then I witnessed such a scene as made my eyes start from their sockets and my blood stand still in my veins. Surely, I thought, this ape must be some Jinn who has cast a spell upon this poor girl and from whom she cannot escape. Yet I could see no signs of terror on the girl, nor did she seem to act unwillingly. I was mightily puzzled and I determined that, at all costs, I would rescue this young woman. At last the two slept. I watched closely to make sure they were unconscious, as they lay without movement. Satisfied that they were not merely quiet, I quickly formed a plan in my mind.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

EVEN IN MY STUPEFACTION, I said to myself: "Now or never is my chance!" so, breaking in the door with a blow of my shoulder, I leapt into the room, brandishing my butcher's knife, which was so sharp that it reached the bone before the flesh.

Throwing myself strongly upon the enormous motionless ape, I cut off his head with one blow, so that the vital force left him with a great noise, rattling, and convulsion; and the girl, suddenly opening her eyes, saw me standing above her with my bloody knife. Her cry of terror was so loud that I feared to see her fall dead; but at last, seeing that I did not wish her ill, she little by little recovered her senses and recognized me. Then she said: "O Wardan, is it thus that you reward a faithful customer?" "O enemy to your own salvation," I answered, "are men not strong enough that you have to indulge in such substitutes?" "O Wardan," she replied, "listen while I tell you the cause of all this and then perhaps you will forgive me. For if Allah who knows all our wickedness will forgive it why should not you forgive that little which you know?"

"I am the only daughter of the grand-wazir. Until the age of fifteen, I lived quietly in my father's palace; but one day, a black slave taught me that which I had to learn and took from me that which I had to give. Passions are, as you know, dangerous and extraordinary things. Feed hate with hate and it cries for more hate. The greater our indulgence, the more keen and all-possessing become our passions. This, then, consumed me like a flame, like a madness. Food,

drink, music, the wisdom of the sages were as nought to me. I only wanted my forbidden fruits. But what is written is written. . . .”

“After some time the negro died at his work, and I told my misfortune to an old woman of the palace who had known me from infancy. She shook her head, saying: ‘The only thing which can replace a negro is an ape, my daughter; apes are similar to negroes.’

“I allowed myself to be persuaded by the old woman and one day, seeing the master of certain performing apes passing by the palace windows with his troupe, I quickly uncovered my face before the largest of them, which happened to be looking in my direction. At once the animal broke its chain, and before its master could stop it, fled by side streets, made a great circle through the gardens, and came back to the palace. There, it ran straight to my chamber, and surprised me by acting in exactly the manner as had my black slave.

“At last my father heard of my relations with the ape and, upon that day, he nearly killed me. As I was not able to do without my lover, I had this subterranean chamber prepared in secret, and shut my ape inside to save his life. Every day I have brought him food and drink, but today, alas, alas! Fate led you to my secret and you have killed my dear! What will become of me?”

I tried to console the girl, saying: “One thing is certain, dear mistress, I can excellently replace the ape myself. You must judge for yourself, as I have some reputation as a lover.” Thus it came about that I consorted with her on that day and on following days and my strength was greater than that of the dead ape or the dead negro.

Things, however, could not go on long in this way; at the end of a few weeks I was lost, as it were, in a bottomless gulf, while the girl seemed to become more desirous day by day and more plagued by an internal fire.

In this troublesome situation I had recourse to the learning of an old woman whom I knew to be without equal in the art of compounding filtres and in preparing cures for the most deep-rooted ills of the body. I told her my story from beginning to end, adding: "I wish to know, good aunt, if you can make me up some remedy which will quench the desires of this woman and calm her nature." "Nothing is easier," said the old woman; and I exclaimed: "I rely entirely on your wisdom."

At once she took an earthen jar in which she placed an ounce of Egyptian lupin seed, an ounce of virgin vinegar, two ounces of hops, and some leaves of digitalis. These she boiled for over two hours and then strained off the liquor, saying: "The cure is ready." I begged her to accompany me to the underground chamber, and, when we had arrived there, she said: "First you must exhaust her until she falls back quite worn out." With that, she withdrew into the corridor to wait until I had followed her advice.

I did as she had suggested so well that the girl fainted quite away; then the old woman came in and, after reheating the mixture, poured it into a little copper basin and placed that under the body of my mistress. The resulting fumigation must have penetrated deeply and had a powerful effect, for suddenly I saw two things fall, one after another, from between her open lips, and lie there wriggling. Looking closely at them, I saw that they were two eels, one yellow and the other black.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING THE TWO EELS, the old woman cried out joyfully, "My son, give thanks to Allah, the cure has worked! They are the twin eels of evil appetite, known to all necromancers and seers of past and present times; now that they have come out, the girl will be wholly temperate and normal and not show herself inordinate in her desire and I, taught by the many years of my life, can judge from her countenance that hers is a fine nature."

She spoke the truth, for, as soon as the girl came to herself, I found her so calm that I did not hesitate to ask for her hand in marriage. Having become used to me, she consented; and, since then, we have lived together the sweetest and most delicious life. Also we have taken care to add to our household the old woman who accomplished this marvellous cure and taught us the remedy for immoderate desires.

Glory be to the Living, who dies not and holds all empires and all kingdoms beneath His hand!

That, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, is all that I know of cures which may be worked on women who demand too much.

Then said King Shahryar: "Indeed, I wish that I had known of that prescription last year, that I might have fumigated the wicked woman whom I surprised in the garden with that black slave. Now, Shahrazade, I wish you to abandon tales of science for the

time being and to tell me tonight, if you can, a story more wonderful than any which I have heard; for tonight I am sadder than usual." "I can," said Shahrazade; and she told:

THE TALE OF YAMLIKA, QUEEN OF THE UNDER EARTH

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a Greek sage called Daniel. He had many disciples who listened respectfully to his teachings and profited by his knowledge, but he had not been blessed with a son to inherit his books and manuscripts. Knowing no other way to attain this object, he prayed to the Master of All; and the Highest, at the door of whose generosity there is no door-keeper, heard his prayer and made the wise man's wife with child at that same hour.

During the months of his wife's pregnancy, the sage, seeing that he was very old, said to himself: "Death is near, and I have no assurance that the son, whom perhaps I shall have, will find my books and manuscripts intact when he should need them." Urged by this consideration, he passed all his time in compressing the knowledge, which was to be found in his many writings, into a few sheets; employing a fine script, he distilled the quintessence of his wisdom and of the five thousand manuscripts which he possessed, upon five sheets of paper. When these were finished, he re-read them and, reflecting for a long time, discovered that there were things upon the five sheets which might be compressed still further. He pondered for a whole year and then wrote out all that was really necessary of the five sheets on to a

single sheet, which was five times smaller than they.

When he had finished his work, he felt that his end was near, so he threw all his manuscripts into the sea, that no other might possess them, and kept only the little bit of paper. To his pregnant wife he said: "My time is finished. I shall never see the child which heaven has given us. It is not allowed to me to bring him up myself. As an inheritance, I leave him this little bit of paper, which you must only give him on that day when he demands his share of his father's goods. If he can read and understand what he reads, he will be the wisest man of his time. I wish him to be called Hasib." So saying the sage Daniel rendered his last breath into the peace of Allah.

All his disciples and the inhabitants of the city walked at his funeral; and there were abundant tears and grief for him.

A few days after, Daniel's wife bore a man-child, who was called Hasib in accordance with his father's wish. She at once summoned the astrologers, who, with calculations and observation of the stars, cast the child's horoscope, saying: "O woman, your son will live for many years if he escapes a danger which hangs above his youth. Also, if he avoids that danger, he will attain great knowledge and wealth." Then they went their way.

When the boy was five years old, his mother put him to school to learn something; but he learnt nothing. She took him from school and would have had him enter some profession, but he insisted on passing the years in doing nothing and reached the age of fifteen without having learnt anything or contributed in any way to the expenses of his mother's life. The woman wept and the neighbours said to her: "Only marriage can give him a taste for work; he will see

that, when one has a wife, one has to work for her support." Hearing this advice, his mother looked among the daughters of her acquaintances and, finding a suitable girl, married her to Hasib. The young man suited his bride and certainly did not neglect her; but he continued to do nothing and would not work.

Now among their neighbours were certain woodcutters who, one day, said to the older woman: "Buy an ass, some ropes, and an axe for your son, and let him go with us to cut wood upon the mountain. We will share the profit with him and so he will be able to help in your support and that of his wife."

Joyfully Hasib's mother bought him an ass, some ropes, and an axe; and eloquently confided her son to the woodcutters, who answered: "Have no fear; for he is the son of our master Daniel; we will protect him and watch over him." They took Hasib with them to the mountain and taught him to cut wood and load it upon an ass; so that, in a short time, he became very fond of his employment since it allowed him to wander as he pleased in the open air and yet to support his wife and mother.

One day, as the whole party were cutting wood on the mountain side, they were surprised by a storm of rain and thunder which caused them to hide in a near-by cave. There they lit a fire to warm themselves and had young Hasib, the son of Daniel, chop faggots to feed the flames.

While Hasib was splitting wood at the back of the cave, he heard his axe strike the ground so sonorously that it seemed certain that there must be a hollow below the earth in that place. At once, he began digging with his feet and soon laid bare a slab of antique marble in the middle of which was a copper ring.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASIB HAILED HIS COMPANIONS who ran up and, helping him to lift the slab, discovered a deep, wide opening in the earth, where innumerable ancient and carefully sealed jars were ranged in rows. Immediately they let Hasib down with ropes into the hollow, to see what the jars might contain and to fasten them to the ropes that they might be drawn up into the cave.

When he reached the ground, Hasib knocked off the neck of one of the earthen jars with his axe and at once saw prime yellow honey escaping from it. He told the woodcutters of his discovery and, though they were a little dashed at finding honey where they expected ancient treasures, they were not displeased to think of the profit which they would make by selling all the jars and their contents. As fast as Hasib fastened the jars to the ropes, they pulled them up and loaded them upon their asses; but, at the end, instead of pulling up their companion, they made off towards the city, saying to each other: "If we had hoisted him up out of the pit, we would have had to share the profit with him. He is a good-for-nothing and is better dead."

They drove their beasts to the market and then sent one of their number to Hasib's mother, who said to her: "While we were on the mountain your poor son's ass was frightened by the storm so that it ran away. Your son hurried after it while the rest of us

hid in a cave. Suddenly, as evil fortune would have it, a wolf leapt from the forest and, killing Hasib, ate him and his ass together. A little blood and a few bones are all that we could find of them."

Hasib's mother and wife beat their faces and, weeping all the tears of despair, covered their heads with dust. So much for them.

The woodcutters sold the jars of honey at a high price and made such profit that each was able to buy a shop and set up as a merchant. They stinted themselves for nothing, eating and drinking of the best on every occasion. So much for them.

When Hasib saw that they did not draw him up out of the pit, he called and begged in vain; for the woodcutters had gone. He tried to dig holes in the side of the pit for his feet and hands; but the walls were of granite and resisted the steel of his axe. His despair knew no bounds and he had thrown himself down on the floor of the pit to die when suddenly he saw a great scorpion come out of a crack in the granite wall and dart forward to sting him. He crushed the beast with a blow of his axe and, examining the fissure from which it had come, saw light beyond. Thrusting in the head of his axe and pulling strongly, he found, to his great surprise, that he was lifting a sliding door, which soon was raised high enough to admit the passage of a man's body.

Without hesitating, Hasib crawled through the opening and found himself in a long subterranean gallery lighted at the far end. This gallery he followed for a whole hour and came at last to a vast door of black steel with a silver lock and a gold key. He opened the door and passed through, to find himself suddenly in the open air on the border of a lake, at the foot of a hill of solid emerald. At the side

of the lake he saw a gold throne, splendid with sparkling stones, and all about it, delightfully reflected in the water, chairs of gold and silver, of emerald and crystal, of steel, of ebony, and of white sandal wood. These chairs he counted and found them to number twelve thousand, neither more nor less. When he had made his count and admired the beauties of all about him and of the water which reflected those beauties, he sat down on the throne to enjoy the prospect of the lake and the mountain more at his ease.

He had not long been seated on the gold throne when he heard a music of cymbals and gongs, and saw, advancing from behind the flanks of the emerald hill and moving towards the lake, a procession of beings who glided rather than walked; but he could not see of what form they were because they were yet far off. When they came nearer, he distinguished that they were women of ravishing beauty but having their lower parts long and limbless and ramping like those of serpents. Their voices were sweet and they sang Greek praises of a queen whom he could not yet see. Presently, though, four of these snake women came from behind the hill, gliding in a square and carrying, upon arms upraised above their heads, a vast basin of gold, in which was seated their beautiful smiling queen. The four women came up to the throne, which Hasib had hastily vacated, and, setting their queen on it, smoothed the folds of her veils and ranged themselves behind her, while the other serpents slipped each towards one of the costly chairs disposed about the lake. The queen addressed them in Greek, with a most pleasant-sounding voice and then, at a signal given by the cymbals, all the doubtful beings sang a Greek hymn in her honour and sat down upon the chairs.

When the hymn was ended the queen, who had noticed Hasib's presence, turned her head kindly towards him and signed to him to approach. Though somewhat frightened, he walked towards the throne and straightway the queen invited him to sit down, saying: "Be welcome to my kingdom under earth, O youth, whose happy fortune has led him hither. Lay aside all fear and tell me your name. I am queen Yamlika; these serpent-women are my subjects. Speak now, and tell me who you are and how you came to this lake which is my Winter dwelling and for which, at a certain season of the year, I leave my Summer home, Mount Kaf."

Young Hasib kissed the earth between the hands of Yamlika and sat down on an emerald seat at her right hand, saying: "My name is Hasib, son of Daniel, the wise man who is dead. Although I could be a merchant or even a great sage, I am content with the trade of woodcutter, as it allows me to breathe the free air of the woods and mountains. I always say to myself that it will be time enough after death to be shut between four walls." Then he told her in detail his adventure with the other woodcutters and how, by chance, he had reached her subterranean kingdom.

Hasib's tale delighted Queen Yamlika. "Hasib," she said to him, "you must be very hungry and thirsty after all the time that you were shut in that pit." So saying, she signed to one of her women, who glided towards the young man bearing on her head a gold dish filled with grapes, pomegranates, apples, pistachios, nuts, fresh figs, and bananas. When he had eaten and appeased his hunger, he drank a delicious sherbert in a cup hollowed out of a single ruby. At length the woman took away the dish and Queen Yam-

lika said to Hasib: "You may rest assured that, while you stay in my kingdom, nothing unpleasant will happen to you. If you would like to spend a week or so with us beside our lake and in the shadow of our mountains, I will pass the time for you by telling you a tale which will be of use to you when you return to the land of men."

Thus it was that Queen Yamlika, sovereign under earth, told this tale in Greek to the twelve thousand serpent-women sitting upon their chairs of emerald and gold, and to young Hasib, son of Daniel the sage:

THE TALE OF BULUKIYA

THERE WAS ONCE, in the kingdom of Banu-Israil, a very wise king who, as he lay upon his deathbed, called his son, the heir to his throne, and said to him: "Bulukiya, my son, when you gain possession of my power, I advise you to make a personal inventory of everything in the palace and to let nothing pass without the most careful scrutiny."

Young Bulukiya's first care, when he became king, was to examine all the goods and treasures of the king his father, and to walk through the various halls which had been used to store the accumulated wealth of the palace. In so doing he came at last to a far and hidden room, where he saw a little chest of ebony supported with a white marble column rising in the middle of the floor. Opening this, he found inside it a gold box and inside the gold box a roll of parchment, which he spread out before his eyes. It contained this, written in Greek:

*He who would become the master and lord of men,
of Jinn, of birds and beasts, need but find the ring*

which the prophet Sulayman wears upon his finger in the Isle of the Seven Seas where he lies buried. It is the magic ring which Adam, father of men, wore upon his finger in Paradise before his fall. It was taken from him by the angel Gabriel, who later gave it to Sulayman the wise. But to cross those seas and to reach that isle beyond the Seventh Sea no ship avails; he only may succeed who finds the plant with magic juice which, rubbed upon the soles of the feet, makes men capable of walking on the surface of the sea. That plant grows in the subterranean kingdom of Queen Yamlika, only she knows where; for she understands the language of all plants and flowers, with the virtue and property of each. Therefore, he who would find the ring must go first to the subterranean kingdom of Queen Yamlika. If he at last succeeds in taking the ring, not only will he be the lord of all created beings but may journey into the Land of Darkness and drink there the Fountain of Life, which gives beauty, youth, wisdom, and immortality.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN PRINCE BULUKIYA had read this parchment, he called together all the priests, magicians, and sages of Banu-Israil and asked if there was one among them who could show him the road to the subterranean kingdom of Queen Yamlika. All pointed to the wise Affan, a worthy old man deeply versed in all knowl-

edge, in the mysteries of magic, the keys of astronomy and geometry, and the arcana of alchemy and sorcery. He rose and stood before the young king, who said to him: "O Affan, are you truly able to guide me to the kingdom of this hidden queen?" "I am," answered Affan.

Young Bulukiya gave his wazir power to direct the affairs of state during his absence and, putting off his royal robe, dressed himself in a pilgrim's mantle and shoes of travel. Then, followed by the learned Affan, he left the city and journeyed into the desert.

Only when they had gone some way did Affan say to him: "Here is the propitious place for those conjurations which will show us our way." They halted; Affan drew a magic circle about him in the sand and, after performing certain rituals, brought to light the spot which was the entrance on that side to my subterranean kingdom. After he had performed other ceremonials the earth opened and left a free way for the two of them to this lake which you now see, O Hasib.

I received them with the courtesy which I always extend to visitors and, when they told me the object of their coming, had myself raised up in my gold basin upon the heads of my carriers and conducted my guests towards the top of this emerald hill. As I went along, the plants and the flowers all began to speak in their own language, left or right, low or high, boasting their various powers. Among the concerted voices of musical and perfumed sap, we came to a cluster of a certain plant which sang from the red mouths of all its flowers in harmony with the breeze which bent them: "He who rubs his feet with my marvellous juice may walk unwetted over all the seas of God."

"This is the plant for which you are looking," I said to my visitors, and at once Affan plucked as many of the blossoms as he wished and, crushing the shoots, collected the sap in a large flask which I had given him.

Wishing to question Affan, I said to him: "O wise old man, will you tell me why you both wish to cross the seas?" "O queen," he answered, "it is because we wish to reach the Isle of the Seven Seas and there to find the magic seal of Sulayman who was master of men and Jinn, beasts and birds." "Do you not know," I said, "that it is impossible for anyone since Sulayman to own that ring? Believe me, Affan! Listen to me, young king Bulukiya! Leave this rash project, this mad undertaking, and pluck rather this other plant which gives eternal youth to those who eat it." But they would not listen to me; they bade me farewell and disappeared by the way they had come.

Here Queen Yamlika paused and, peeling a banana for young Hasib, ate a fig herself, and said: "O Hasib, before I go on with the tale of Bulukiya and describe his journey across the Seven Seas and the other adventures which befell him, would you not like to know exactly where my kingdom lies at the foot of Kaf, which surrounds the earth as with a belt, and to hear something of its size, its neighbourhood, its living and talking plants, its Jinn, and its snake-women of whom Allah alone can tell the number? Would you not wish me to describe how Kaf lies all along on a marvellous rock of emerald, Al-Sakrat, whose reflection gives their colour to the skies? I could tell you the exact place in Kaf where Jinnistan is, which is the capital of the Jinn ruled over by King Jan bin Jan, and reveal to you the place where the Rocs live in the Valley of Diamonds and point out to

you the battlefields which yet sing the exploits of old heroes."

Young Hasib answered: "O Queen Yamlika, I would much rather hear the rest of the adventures of King Bulukiya."

So the princess of under earth went on:

When Bulukiya and the wise Affan left me to make their way to the island at the other end of the Seven Seas where lies the body of Sulayman, they came presently to the shore of the First Sea and, sitting down, began to rub the soles and ankles of their feet with plant juice from the flask. This done they rose and began to walk very cautiously upon the water; but when they found that they could walk more easily upon the sea than upon dry land, without any fear of drowning, they grew bolder and began to walk faster so as not to lose any time. For three days and three nights they walked over that sea and, on the morning of the fourth day, came to an island which they thought to be Paradise because it was so beautiful.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE SAND WAS OF gilded saffron and the rocks of jade and ruby; the meadow spread out into gardens of bright flowers, scenting the breeze which wandered there; the smiles of roses married with the tender glances of narcissus; lilies and carnations, violet, anemone, and camomile, lived in one scented friendship

together, while the light gazelles gamboled and ran between hedges white with jasmin. Forests of aloes and trees with large shining flowers murmured through their branches as the doves leaned from them to answer the water streams. There the nightingales told of their martyred love to the roses, in voices of silver pain; while the roses listened. Melodious rivers hid among clumps of sugar-cane, their only reeds; and the natural earth showed forth at ease her rich youth, breathing of all her thousand Springs.

Bulukiya and Affan walked in this beauty till evening, shaded by the groves and filling their souls with happiness. Then, as night fell, they climbed up into a tree to sleep and were about to close their eyes, when suddenly the island began to ring with a lowing which made it tremble to its foundation, and there came up out of the waves of the sea a monstrous beast, holding a luminous stone in its jaws as if it had been a torch, and, directly behind it, a multitude of other sea monsters, each holding a like stone in a like manner. When these lighted jewels had made the island as bright as day, there came down from the interior so many lions, tigers, and leopards, that Allah alone might have counted them. The land beasts met the sea beasts on the shore and there they talked and chatted together until the morning. With the first light, the sea-monsters returned into their element and the wild beasts went back to the forest. Then Bulukiya and Affan, who for very fear had not slept a wink all night, came down hastily from their tree and, running to the shore, made haste to rub their feet with the juice of the magic plant.

They walked across the Second Sea for days and nights until at last they came to the foot of a chain of mountains in the middle of which opened a marvel-

lous valley. In it every pebble and every rock was magnetic and there was no trace of wild beast or any dangerous animal. They journeyed through the valley all day at haphazard, sustaining themselves with dried fish, and at evening sat down on the sea shore to watch the setting of the sun. Suddenly a terrible screaming came to their ears and, turning quickly, they saw a tiger springing towards them. They had just time before it sprang to rub their feet with the sap and to run out to sea beyond the creature's reach.

This was the Third Sea; the night was very black and the waves high, because of the wind, so that walking upon it became most tiring to travellers who were already worn out with want of sleep. Happily, at dawn, they came to an island and there lay down to sleep. When they woke they walked inland and discovered that the isle was filled with fruit trees which differed from other trees in this marvellous particular, that the fruit grew upon them already preserved with sugar. The two travellers enjoyed themselves very much in this island, especially Bulukiya who was extremely fond of crystallised fruits and all sweet things. He passed the rest of the day in eating and persuaded Affan to stay there for ten further days in order that he might have time to take full advantage of the delicious fruits. At the end of the tenth day, however, he had so abused the sweet trove that he had a belly-ache; therefore he and Affan anointed their soles and ankles once more and walked out on to the Fourth Sea.

They went forward upon it for four days and four nights and then landed at an island which was nothing more than a strip of very fine white sand in which every kind of reptile known to man lay hid, after having placed their eggs to be hatched in the sun. As

there was no tree or blade of grass to be seen, the travellers only stayed long enough upon this sand to give their feet a fresh coating from the flask.

They had but to walk for one day and one night across the Fifth Sea before they came, at dawn, to a little island whose mountains were of crystal with great veins of gold and which was covered with astonishing trees whose flowers were bright yellow. At night these flowers shone like stars and their light, reflected by the crystal rocks, lit up the island so that it shone more even than in the day time. Said Affan to Bulukiya: "This is the Isle of Gold Flowers; when these blossoms fall from the trees and dry, they run to powder and become gold. The Isle of Gold Flowers is a piece of the sun which fell to earth in times gone by."

They passed a night of great splendour upon that island, and in the morning, after rubbing their feet with the precious fluid, ventured out upon the Sixth Sea.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEY WALKED OVER the Sixth Sea for long enough to feel great pleasure when they came to an island thickly and beautifully wooded, and rested upon the shore. When they were refreshed, they began to walk among the trees; but, to their horror, soon noticed that these bore human heads instead of fruit and with their

hair as stalks. These human clusters had different expressions: some smiled, others wept or laughed, and those which fell from the trees rolled about in the dust until they became globes of fire which lighted the forest and paled the sunlight. Thinking upon the strangeness of the forest, the two companions dared not approach the fruits more closely but returned to the sea shore. They were sitting behind a rock as evening fell, when suddenly they saw twelve sea girls of surpassing beauty and wearing chains of pearls about their necks, come up out of the water and dance a round upon the sand; leaping, and playing a thousand pretty games for an hour together. After that they sang in the moonlight and then swam out to sea. Though Bulukiya and Affan were delighted by the beauty and the singing and dancing of these sea girls, they did not care to stay any longer in that island because of the terrible growth upon the trees; therefore they rubbed their feet and ankles with more sap from the flask and ventured out upon the Seventh Sea.

Their journey was long over this Seventh Sea; they walked day and night for two months without spying any land and, in order that they might not die of hunger, were obliged to catch fish, which came sometimes to the surface, and to eat them raw. It was not long before they realised the wisdom of the advice which had been given to them and heartily wished that they had followed it; yet, at length, they came to an island which they rightly supposed to be the Isle of the Seven Seas, where was the body of Sulayman and the magic ring upon his finger.

They found the Isle of the Seven Seas covered with fruit trees and watered by many streams; as they were hungry and dry in the throat after their long diet of raw fish, they joyfully approached a large apple tree,

burdened with ripe fruit. Bulukiya stretched out his hand and would have plucked one, when a terrible voice was heard crying from inside the tree: "If you touch this fruit you will be cut into two bits!" At the same moment, an enormous giant, forty cubits high, appeared before them, to whom the terrified Bulukiya said: "O chief of the giants, we are dying of hunger and do not know why you should forbid us to touch these apples." "How can you pretend to be ignorant of the reason?" asked the giant. "Have you forgotten, O sons of men, that Adam, the father of your race, rebelled against Allah and ate forbidden fruit? Since then it has been my duty to stand guard over this tree and to kill all who would touch its clusters. Depart and find your food in some other place."

Bulukiya and Affan hastened to leave that spot and, after refreshing themselves with other fruit in the interior of the island, began their search for the burial place of Sulayman.

After wandering for a day and a night about the island, they came to a hill whose rocks were of musk and yellow amber and in whose sides opened a magnificent cave with roof and walls of solid diamond. Since it was thus lighted more brightly than by the sun, they ventured further in, finding the light grow greater and the roof higher as they advanced. They walked on and on, marvelling all the time, and suddenly, just as they had begun to wonder whether the cave had any end, turned into a vast hall hewn from the solid diamond, having in its centre a great bed of heavy gold on which lay Sulayman, Son of David, in the green mantle sewn with mighty pearls which he wore in life. The magic ring circled the finger of his right hand and shot out fires which paled the splendours of the diamond; the hand which wore it rested upon his

breast, the other stretched out beside him, holding a gold sceptre eyed with emeralds.

At first Bulukiya and Affan felt so much respect for the illustrious dead that they dared not advance; but, at last, Affan said to Bulukiya: "We have faced so many dangers upon our weary journey; we must not recoil now that we have attained our end. I will go alone up to the throne where the Prophet sleeps, while you pronounce the conjurations which I have taught you to cause the ring to slip from that rigid finger."

Bulukiya began the magic formula while Affan went up to the throne and stretched forth his hand to take the ring; but the young man, in his emotion, pronounced the words of power backwards and this mistake was fatal to the sage; for, from the bright ceiling, there fell a drop of liquid diamond which set him all on fire and, in the twinkling of an eye, reduced him to a handful of dust at the foot of the throne of Sulayman.

When Bulukiya saw the punishment which had fallen upon Affan for his sacreligious attempt, he rushed through the cave and, leaving its entrance, hastened directly down to the sea. There he would have rubbed his feet and left the island, but he remembered that he could not, since the flask and its miraculous contents had been burned up with Affan.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SADLY AT LENGTH he understood all I had meant when I warned him of the misfortunes which he was certain to encounter upon his desperate quest. He walked at random about the isle, alone, friendless, and without a guide, not knowing at all what he should do.

As he wandered thus, he saw a great cloud of dust from which issued a tumult more deafening than thunder; he heard within it the shock of lances and swords, with a confused sound of galloping and cries of things inhuman. Suddenly the dust fell and from it appeared a whole army of Ifrits, Jinn, Marids, and Ghouls, with every other spirit of air and sea and ocean, of wood and stream and sand.

Being too terrified to run away, he waited till the chief of this fabulous army came towards him, saying: "Who are you? How did you come to this isle which we visit every year to watch over the cave where our master Sulayman, Son of David, sleeps?" "O mighty captain," answered Bulukiya, "I am Bulukiya, King of the Banu-Israil. I was lost at sea, and that is why I am here. May I ask in my turn who you are, and who are all these warriors?" "We are those of the Jinn who claim descent from Jan bin Jan," replied the other, "we have just come from the land where dwells Sakhr, our mighty king. He is the master of the White Land reigned over in times past by Shaddad, son of Ad." "Where is that White Land where the great Sakhr lives?" asked Bulukiya; and the other answered: "Behind Mount Kaf which is

seventy-five months' journey from here by human reckoning. But we can cover the distance in the twinkling of an eye. As you are a king's son, we will, if you like, take you and present you to our master." The young prince hastened to accept this offer and was immediately transported by the Jinn to the dwelling of King Sakhr.

He found this to be a magnificent plain, seamed with canals having gold and silver beds. The floor of it was covered with musk and saffron and it was shaded with artificial trees whose leaves were emeralds and their fruit rubies. The whole space was covered with proud tents of green silk, held up by thin poles of jewelled gold. In the centre was a pavilion higher than all the rest, made out of red and blue silk, supported by alternate columns of ruby and emerald. Within it, on a throne of wrought gold, sat King Sakhr, with his vassal kings on his right hand, and on his left, wazirs, lieutenants, nobles, and chamberlains.

Bulukiya kissed the earth between the king's hands and made him a compliment. Then Sakhr kindly invited him to sit on a gold seat by his side and asked him his story. When the young man told all that had happened to him from beginning to end, without omitting a single detail, the king and all with him were mightily astonished. The cloth was set for a feast and servant Jinn brought dishes and plates of porcelain to the company. Those dishes which were of gold contained fifty young boiled camels and fifty roasted ones, while the silver dishes held fifty sheep's heads, and the porcelain plates a careful arrangement of marvellously big fruit. When all was ready, the Jinn and their guest ate and drank abundantly until not a trace remained of any of the food which had been set before them.

Then, and only then, King Sakhr said to Bulukiya: "You are doubtless ignorant of our story and our origin. I will tell you of them in a few words, so that, when you return among the sons of men, you may hand down to future ages the truth of matters which otherwise would be dark and doubtful to them."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"IN THE BEGINNING Allah created the Fire and shut it within seven different regions of the Globe, placed one above the other but a thousand years apart. He called the first region of the Fire, Jahannam, and in His wisdom set it apart for rebel creatures who would not repent. He called the second region Laza, because it was dug in the form of a gulf, and set it apart for those who, after the future coming of Muhamad the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) should remain in the darkness of their error and refuse to believe. The third region he formed as a boiling cauldron, calling it Jahin, and appointed it for Gog and Magog. The fourth region He called Sair, and appointed it for the place of Eblis, commander of the rebel angels, who had refused to recognise and humble himself before Adam, thus disobeying the strict command of the Almighty. He fixed the bounds of the fifth region, calling it Sakhr, and appointing it for the impious, the lying, and the proud. Then He dug an

immense cavern, and, filling it with sultry and pestilential air, called it Hitmat, and appointed it for the tortures of Jews and Christians. The seventh, Hawiyah, He placed in reserve, to contain the overflow of Jews and Christians and those who made a show of belief. These two last regions are by far the worst, while the first region is easily supportable. Their structure is much the same in each case. The first, Jahannam, has seventy thousand mountains of fire, each mountain encloses seventy thousand valleys, each valley holds seventy thousand cities, each city, seventy thousand towers, each tower, seventy thousand houses, and each house, seventy thousand benches. On each of these benches, whose number you can reckon out for yourself, there are seventy thousand separate kinds of torture and punishment, whose infinite variety is known to God alone. As this first region is the mildest of the seven, you may form some idea of the torments which wait in the six others.

“I have given you this sketch and explanation of the Fire because we, the Jinn, are the sons of Fire.

“The first two creatures which Allah created from fire were the two Jinn, whom He appointed to be His own particular guard, calling them Khalit and Malit. To one he gave the form of a lion and to the other the body of a wolf; the lion He equipped with masculine organs and the wolf with feminine. The yard of the lion Khalit is twenty years long and the passage of Malit, the wolf, is formed like a tortoise and made in proportion to Khalit’s yard. One is black and white, the other white and rose. It came to pass that Allah joined Khalit and Malit together and, from their copulation, were born serpents, dragons, and scorpions and all beasts that stink; so that the seven regions might be stocked for the torment of the damned. Then

Allah commanded Khalit and Malit to couple a second time, and from that coupling were born seven males and seven females who grew up in obedience. When they were full grown, one of them, who gave the brightest hopes, was specially chosen out by the Highest and given command of those increasing cohorts which sprang from the incessant business of Khalit and Malit. This chief was named Eblis; later, because of his disobedience to Allah, who had ordered him to bow down before Adam, he was hurled into the fourth region with all those who had joined him in his rebellion. From Eblis and his seed are sprung all the male and female devils with which the hells are peopled. As for the six other youths and the females, who had remained obedient, they came together and from them are sprung the Jinn to whom we belong. There you have our genealogy in a few words. You must not be astonished to see us eat so much, for, as you now know, we are sprung, in the first place, from a lion and a wolf. To give you an idea of the capacity of our bellies: each of us, every day eats ten camels and twenty sheep and drinks forty ladles full of soup, each ladle being as big as a cauldron.

“Now, O Bulukiya, that you may be all-wise when you return among the sons of men, learn that the earth on which we live is ever refreshed by snows from Mount Kaf, which circles it like a girdle; otherwise, no one could live upon the earth because of the fires beneath it. Earth herself is also formed in seven layers which rest upon the shoulders of an exceedingly powerful Jinni. This Jinni stands upon a rock and the rock upon the back of a bull; the bull is held up by an enormous fish, and the fish swims in the sea of Eternity.

“The bed of the Sea of Eternity is the roof of Hell,

which, with its seven regions, is held in the jaws of a gigantic serpent, who shall stay still until the Judgment Day. Then he shall vomit up Hell and its people into the presence of God, who will then pass His final judgment upon all things."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THERE, RAPIDLY RESUMED, is the story of our making and the making of the world.

"That your instruction may be perfect, I must also tell you that our age never changes; we never grow old, although the earth about us, with its nature and the men and beasts upon it, hurry unceasingly towards decrepitude. This eternity of youth we owe to the Fountain of Life which Khizr guards in the land of shadows and of which we have drunk. It is holy Khizr who equalises the seasons, recrowns the trees with royal green, unbinds the fleeing streams, spreads out grass carpets on the meadows, and hangs his light green mantle in the evening air to colour the skies after the sun has set.

"Now, Bulukiya, since you have listened to me with great attention, I will, if you wish it, reward you by having you carried from here to the confines of your own country." The prince heartily thanked the King of the Jinn for his hospitality, for his instruction, and for his last offer. He took leave of the wazirs and other Ifrits and, mounting astride the shoulders of a

very strong Jinni, was carried in a flash of time through space and set down gently upon earth he knew, near the frontier of his own country.

Bulukiya had determined which road to follow and was about to step forth in it towards his capital, when he saw, between two tombs, a youth sitting and weeping bitterly. The stranger's beauty was ravishing, but his face was pale and very sad. Going up to him, the young king greeted him in friendly fashion, saying: "Fair youth, why do you thus sit weeping between two tombs? Tell me the reason of your sadness and I will try to comfort you." The young man lifted his sad eyes to Bulukiya, and answered weeping: "O traveller, why do you thus stop upon your way? Let my tears fall in solitude upon these stones of my grief." But Bulukiya said: "Unfortunate brother, I have a compassionate heart ready to listen; you can tell me the cause of your sadness without fear." So saying, he sat down on the marble and, taking his two hands, encouraged him to speak by telling him his own story from beginning to end. "And now, brother," he said when he had finished, "what tale is yours? Hasten to tell me, for I feel that it will touch me infinitely."

The youth with the sweet sad face, who wept between the two tombs, said to young King Bulukiya:

THE TALE OF THE FAIR SAD YOUTH

BROTHER, I ALSO am a king's son and my story is so strange and extraordinary that if it were written with needles in the corner of an eye yet it would serve as an improving lesson to whoso read it sympathetically. Therefore I will not delay in telling it to you.

(He remained silent for a few moments, wiping away his tears and leaning his forehead upon his hand; then he began the following remarkable story:)

I was born in the land of Kabul, where my father, King Tigmus, rules over the Banu-Shahlan and over Afghanistan. My father, who is a very great and just king, has seven tributary kings beneath him, each the master of a hundred cities and a hundred fortresses. He commands a hundred thousand brave riders and a hundred thousand mighty warriors. My mother is the daughter of King Bahrwan, lord of Khorasan. My name is Janshah.

From earliest childhood, my father had me trained in knowledge, art, and bodily exercise, so that by the time I was fifteen, I was considered one of the most accomplished cavaliers in all the kingdom and would lead every hunt or race upon my deer-swift horse.

One day, during a hunt at which the king, my father, and all his officers were present, when we had been out for three days in the forest and had killed much game, I saw, just as the sun was setting, a fine gazelle spring up near the place where I was resting with seven of my mamelukes. Seeing us, she turned tail and lightly sprang away. For many hours I followed with my mamelukes and we came at last to a broad deep river where we hoped to be able to corner the animal and capture her; but, after a moment's hesitation, she sprang into the river and swam powerfully towards the opposite shore. We jumped off our horses and, leaving one to guard them, leapt into a fishing boat which was stranded thereabouts, and rowed quickly after the gazelle. By the time we had reached the centre of the stream, however, we were no longer master of our craft; the wind and current bore us out of our course in the growing darkness, and in spite of

all our efforts to return to safety, we were hurried along all night at a terrifying speed, expecting to be destroyed each moment against some rock or other obstacle. All next day and through the second night we were borne helplessly, but without accident; and it was only on the morning of the second day that the current swept us to land and enabled us to disembark.

During this time my father, King Tigmus, having learnt of our disappearance in the river from the mameluke whom we had left to guard the horses, was thrown into such a state of despair that he burst into sobs, threw his crown from him, bit the hands of grief, and hastened to send messengers into all parts to look for us. My mother, hearing that I was lost, gave herself violent blows in the face, tore her garments, bruised her breast, pulled out her hair, and put on mourning robes.

When we landed, we found a fair stream flowing between the trees and a man sitting quietly by the side of it, refreshing his feet in the water. We greeted him courteously and asked him where we were; but he, without returning our greeting, answered in a shrill voice, like the cry of a bird of prey.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN HE ROSE with a bound and split in two at the waist; his body rushed upon us while his lower half made off in another direction. At once, from all parts

of the forest, appeared other men like him, who, running down to the stream, there divided themselves in half with a backward jerk, and came bounding towards us with their bodies only. They flung themselves upon the three of my mamelukes who were nearest and began to eat them alive. I and the other three threw ourselves in terror into our boat, preferring a thousand times to be swallowed by the water than by these monsters, and, pushing out from the bank, allowed ourselves to be carried down stream. We saw all the legs and thighs rushing along the bank and trying to reach us, while the bodies remained to finish eating the three unhappy mamelukes. This horrid pursuit was kept up until we were well out of reach; so that we were astonished by the terrible appetites of these bodies with divided belly and, while we mourned our unfortunate companions, asked each other how such a thing might be.

We were carried on by the current until the following morning when we grounded again upon a spit of land, covered with fruit trees and large gardens of delightful flowers. Not wishing to land myself, I bade my three mamelukes go on shore to inspect the country. They returned after half a day, telling me that they had gone far to right and left without seeing any suspicious thing. Eventually they had seen a palace of white marble whose pavilions were of crystal, built round a splendid garden with a fair lake. They had entered the palace and seen a vast hall in which ivory chairs were ranged about a throne of jewelled gold; but neither in the garden nor the palace had they found trace of any living thing.

Re-assured by this report, I decided to leave the boat. On our way through the gardens we refreshed ourselves with ripe fruit plucked from the trees and

then entered the palace to rest. I sat on the gold throne while my mamelukes seated themselves on the ivory chairs. In this royal situation I remembered the king, my father, and my mother and the throne which I had lost, and I wept until my followers wept for sympathy.

While we were plunged in these sad memories, we heard a great noise like the tumult of the sea and saw a procession entering the hall made up of what seemed to be wazirs, emirs, chamberlains and nobles, but who were, nevertheless, all apes. They were a great host, some small, some large; and we thought that this time our death had surely come; but the grand wazir of the apes, a beast of enormous stature, came and bowed before me with signs of evident respect and, speaking with a human tongue, told me that he and his people acknowledged me as their king and my three mamelukes as the commanders of their army. After regaling us with roast gazelle, he invited me to review the army of the apes, my subjects, who were all prepared for immediate battle with their ancient foes, the Ghouls, their nearest neighbours.

Being worn with fatigue, I dismissed the grand wazir and the others, keeping only my three mamelukes; we discussed our situation for an hour and decided to leave that palace and that land as quickly as possible. We therefore made our way down to the river, but there discovered that our boat had disappeared and were obliged to return to the palace, where we slept till morning.

When we woke, the wazir of my new subjects came to salute me and told me that all was ready for the battle against the Ghouls. At the same time, other important people brought round to the palace four great dogs which should serve for riding animals for

myself and my mamelukes. We had no choice left but to mount these dogs, which were bridled with steel chains, and take our place at the head of the army, while numberless cohorts of apes led by the wazir, followed us with howls and terrible cries.

After marching for a day and a night we came opposite a high black mountain, riddled with lairs of the Ghouls. The enemy soon showed themselves; they were of different kinds, each more horrid than the others: some had the heads of bulls on the bodies of camels, others were like hyenas, and yet more had an indescribably base appearance and could be compared with nothing known to man.

When the Ghouls saw us, they rushed down from the mountain and, halting at its foot, began to trouble us with a rain of stones. My followers answered with the same missiles and soon the fight was terrible and general on both sides. My mamelukes and I, armed with our bows, killed a great quantity of the Ghouls with our arrows, to the vast joy of my followers. At last we gained the victory and set out in pursuit of the fleeing Ghouls.

We four resolved to take advantage of the disorder of the pursuit to escape from the apes through the speed of our dogs; therefore we turned and made off in the opposite direction, without attracting attention, and disappeared at full gallop from sight of the two armies.

After we had ridden for a long time, we halted to breathe our dogs and in that place where we stopped we saw a big smooth rock on which this inscription was engraved in Hebrew:

O captive, whom Fate has cast into this place to be a king of Apes, if you would renounce that royalty in

flight, two roads are open for your salvation: the shorter which lies to the right will lead you to the bank of that sea which goes all round the earth; but the way leads through savage deserts filled with monsters and the evil Jinn; the other, to the left, is four months long and makes through a great valley which is called the Valley of the Ants. If you take this second road and manage to escape the ants, you will come to a mountain of fire at the foot of which is built the City of the Jews. I, Sulayman, son of David, have written this for your salvation.

When we had read this inscription marvelling, we hastened along the road to the left which should lead us to the City of the Jews by way of the Valley of the Ants.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WE HAD NOT journeyed for more than a day when we felt the ground tremble beneath our feet and presently saw behind us all my subject apes, with the wazir at their head, advancing towards us at great speed. When they reached us, they surrounded us on all sides with howls of joy at having found us again and the wazir, making himself their spokesman, made us a speech of congratulation upon our safety.

This meeting annoyed us very much, but we took care to hide our feelings and were about to turn round

and go back to the palace with the people of my new kingdom when, from the other end of the valley which we were crossing there burst an army of ants each as big as a dog. In the twinkling of an eye a terrible skirmish took place between my subjects and the ants; the latter taking the apes in their pincers and cutting them in two with one movement, and the apes throwing themselves by ten and ten on an ant and pulling it to pieces.

We wished to take advantage of this unexpected battle to fly upon our dogs; but unhappily I was the only one who was able to escape; for my three mamelukes were seen by the ants and rent in pieces with their terrible pincers. Mourning for the fate of my lost companions, I came at last to a river which I crossed by swimming, having left my dog upon the nearer bank. Landing in safety, I dried my clothes and fell into a deep sleep until morning, feeling certain that I need not fear pursuit as I had placed the river between myself and the combined danger of the apes and the ants.

When I woke I started on foot upon a journey which lasted for days and days, during which I had no sustenance but plants and roots. In the end, however, I came to the mountain of fire, at the foot of which I found the City of the Jews, even as I had been told in the inscription. But the writing on the rock had not informed me of one thing which I noticed later and which astonished me very much: a river which I had to cross dry-foot to reach the city on that particular day was filled with water for all the rest of the week. Afterwards I learnt that this abundant flood did not flow on Saturday, which is a feast day with the Jews.

I entered the city but saw no one in the streets; therefore I went up to the first building which I came

to and, opening the door, walked into it. I found myself in a hall where a great number of venerable men were seated in a circle. Encouraged by their appearance, I went up to them and, after saluting them respectfully, said: "I am Janshah, son of King Tigmus, master of Kabul and lord of the Banu-Shahlan. I beg you to tell me, my masters, how far I am from my own country and what road I must take to get there. Also I am hungry." The seated men looked at me without answering and he who seemed to be their chief signed to me without uttering a word: "Eat and drink; but do not talk." He showed me a dish of astonishing meats such as I had never seen before, which seemed, to judge by the smell, to be all composed on a basis of oil. I ate and drank and kept silence.

When I had finished, the leader of the Jews came up to me and asked me, also by signs: "Who? Whence? Whither?" I asked him by signs if I was allowed to answer; to which he replied by another sign which seemed to say: "Only use three words." Then said I: "Caravan, Kabul, when?" "Not know," he answered by a sign; and then signalled to me to depart as I had finished my meal.

I saluted him and the rest and then went out marvelling at these strange manners. Once in the street, I was looking about for someone who would help me in my difficulty, when I heard the public crier calling in a loud voice: "He who would earn a thousand gold pieces and gain possession of a young slave, whose beauty is without equal, has but to follow me and do an hour's work!" Being utterly destitute, I went up to the man and said: "I accept the work and also the thousand dinars and the young slave." He took me by the hand and led me to a richly furnished house where an old Jew was sitting upon a seat of ebony.

The crier bowed before him, saying: "Here is a young stranger. He is the only one who answered my invitation during the three months that I have cried it."

As soon as he heard this, the old Jew made me sit down at his side and with great kindness offered me food and drink of excellent quality. When I had feasted, he gave me a purse containing a thousand gold pieces which were not counterfeit and, at the same time, ordered his slaves to clothe me in a silk robe and conduct me into the presence of the young girl, whom he gave me in advance in consideration of the unknown work which I had to do.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AFTER PUTTING THE silk robe upon me, they led me into the room where the young girl waited for me. I saw at once that she was very beautiful and when I was left alone to pass the night with her, found that she was also as virgin as the old Jew had described. I stayed with her for three days and three nights, eating, drinking, and doing that which I had to do; but on the morning of the fourth day the old man called me to him, saying: "Are you now ready to do the work for which you have been paid?" Although I did not know what this work was, I had to answer that I was ready.

Then at the old Jew's order, slaves brought round

two harnessed mules; their master mounted one of them and bade me get up on to the other and follow. We set off at a good pace and rode till noon, when we came to the foot of a high mountain, up whose sides was no path by which man or beast might climb. We dismounted and the old Jew handed me a knife, saying: "Thrust this into the belly of your mule; the time has come for work." I thrust the knife into the belly of my mule, who died at once, and then, under the directions of my master, skinned the beast and roughly cleaned the hide. When this was done, he said: "Now lie down upon the skin while I sew you up in it." I obeyed and, when I was well stretched upon the skin, the old man sewed it over me carefully. "Listen," he said, "very soon a great bird will pounce upon you and carry you up to its nest at the top of this inaccessible mountain. Be very careful not to move when you feel yourself in the air; for, if you do, the bird may let go of you and you will be dashed to pieces; but when he sets you down upon the mountain rip up the skin with your knife and come out of your concealment. The bird will be terrified and let you be. Then all you have to do is to pick up the precious stones which are strewn on that high peak and throw them down to me. After that you can come down and rejoin me."

Hardly had the old Jew finished speaking when I felt myself lifted into the air and then, at the end of a few further moments, set down again. Slitting up the skin with my knife, I thrust forth my head, which so terrified the monstrous bird that it flew away as fast as its wings would carry it. I set to work and speedily gathered a considerable quantity of rubies, emeralds, and other precious stones, which I threw down to the old Jew; but when I would have gone down myself, I

realised that there was no foothold and, even while I was looking for one, saw the old Jew galloping away upon his mule, which he had loaded with the jewels.

Despairing utterly, I wept over my fate and found nothing better to do than to walk straight before my face at haphazard for two long months, until I came, by Allah's grace, to the end of that chain of mountains and found there a wonderful valley, where the streams, the trees, and flowers, glorified Him among the jargon-ing of countless birds. I saw a mighty palace rising high into the air and made my way towards it. Coming to the gate, I beheld, seated upon a bench in the entrance, an old man, whose face was shone about with light. He held a ruby sceptre in his hand and on his head there was a crown of diamonds; so I bowed low before him. He greeted me kindly, saying: "Sit down beside me, my son," and when I was seated, he continued: "Whence have you come into this land which never before a human foot has visited? And whither have you in your mind to go?" For sole answer, I burst into tears, strangling myself with sobs; so that the old man said to me: "Do not weep in this way, my son, it cuts me to the heart. Be of good courage and, before you tell me anything, strengthen yourself with food and drink." He led me into a high hall and fed me until he saw that I was in better case; then he asked me to tell him my story. I did so and then asked him in my turn to whom the palace belonged; he answered: "My son, this palace was built of old time by our master Sulayman, whose lieutenant of the birds I am. Each year all the birds of the world come to do me homage. If you wish to return to your own country, I will give you into the care of the first who return to take my orders and they will carry you whither you will. To pass the time until they come,

you may move freely about this immense building and enter all its halls, except that one which is opened with the gold key which you see among all these other keys." Then the old man, the lieutenant of the birds, gave me the keys and left me to follow my own inclinations.

I began by visiting the halls which gave upon the main court of the palace and then examined the inner rooms which were all fitted up to serve as lodgings for the birds; in the end, I came to the door which was opened by the gold key and stood looking at it for a long time, not daring even to touch it with my hand, because of the command which the old man had given me.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN THE END, however, not being able to resist the curiosity with which my soul was filled, I placed the key in the lock and, opening the door, entered the forbidden place trembling with expectation.

Far from my eyes being greeted by some frightful spectacle, I saw, in the middle of a pavilion whose floor was formed with a mosaic of many coloured jewels, a silver fountain basin surrounded by birds made of gold, from whose mouths the water jetted with so sweet a noise that it seemed as if the living voices of those creatures which the fountain copied, were echoing back from the silver walls in forest

music. In ravishing variety, all round the basin, were beds of softly perfumed flowers, marrying their colours with those of the fruits which hung down from trees coolly shadowing the water. The sand yielding to my feet was powder of emeralds and powder of diamonds, and stretched in a soft path up to the steps of a throne which overlooked the water. This throne was hewn out of a single ruby, whose faces cast red rays across the garden into the water.

I halted in ecstasy before this simple union of the pure elements; then, climbing on to the throne, which was shaded by a red silk canopy, I shut my eyes to let the refreshment of this vision penetrate my spirit.

When I opened my eyes, I saw three beautiful doves coming down to the basin to take their bath, ruffling their white plumes. They hopped gracefully upon the broad rim of the silver basin and then, before my marvelling eyes, when they had embraced and given each other a thousand charming caresses, each one threw from her her virgin mantle of feathers and, coming out of it, appeared in jasmin nakedness as a young girl fairer than the moon. They plunged into the water and there gave themselves up to sweet and foolish games, sometimes diving from sight, then reappearing in a sparkle of ripples, then sinking again, with pretty laughter, until only their hair showed spread out, as bright as flame upon the water.

At this sight, O Bulukiya, my brother, I felt my reason swimming about my mind and trying to escape. Not being able to contain myself, I ran madly towards the basin side, crying: "O young girls, O moons, O queens!"

When the maidens saw me, each gave a cry of fright and, coming up quickly out of the water, ran and covered her nakedness with her robe of feathers. Then

all three flew up into the highest of those trees which fringed the basin and looked down upon me laughing.

I went up to the tree and lifted my eyes, saying: "O royal ladies, I pray you tell me who you are. I am Janshah, son of King Tigmus, master of Kabul and lord of the Banu-Shahlan." Then the youngest of the three, whose charms had moved me most, answered: "We are the daughters of King Nasr, who lives in the palace of diamonds; we but came here to bathe and for our amusement." Then said I: "In that case, have compassion upon me, my mistress; come down and finish the game with me." "O Janshah," she answered, "since when have young girls been able to play with young men? If you are determined to know me better, you have but to follow me to my father's palace." So saying, she gave me a glance which pierced my very liver and flew away with her two sisters.

Seeing them disappear, I gave a despairing cry and fell in a swoon beneath the tree.

I do not know how long I lay there; when I came to myself, the old man, the lieutenant of the birds, sat at my side sprinkling my face with water of flowers. As soon as he saw me open my eyes, he said: "Behold my child, the fruit of disobedience; did I not forbid you to open the door of this pavilion?" For sole answer, I burst into tears and improvised these lines:

*Rubies in a queen's hair,
Roses on a tree,
Hide their reds, hide their heads
Before her lips.
The moon's light is not white
Before her hips,*

*And all the girls of India
They die of jealousy.*

When I had made an end of this verse, the old man said: "I understand what has happened to you; you have seen the young girls dressed like doves who sometimes come to take their bath here." "I have indeed seen them, my father," I cried, "and I beg you to tell me the way to the palace of diamonds where they live with their father, King Nasr." "You must not even think of going there, my son," he answered, "King Nasr is one of the most powerful leaders of the Jinn, and I am very sure that he would not give you one of his daughters in marriage. Rather busy yourself with preparations for your journey; for I myself will help your return by recommending you to the birds who will soon be coming to give me their homage." "I thank you, my father," I said, "but I renounce all thought of returning to my people if I cannot see that girl who spoke with me again!" So saying, I threw myself weeping at the old man's feet and begged him to find some way by which I might find again those white plumed maidens.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD MAN TOOK me by the hand and lifted me to my feet, saying: "I see that your heart burns with passion for the girl, and therefore I will show

you a way of beholding her again. You must hide behind the trees and wait patiently for the return of those doves. Allow them to undress and go down into the water; then suddenly run to their feather mantles and gain possession of them. The girls will soften their language towards you; they will come up to you and try to flatter you, with a thousand caresses and honeyed words, into giving back their plumes. If they can persuade you, you will never see them again; therefore sternly refuse to give back the robes, and say: 'I cannot let you have them until the sheikh returns.' Treat them gallantly while you are waiting for me and, when I come, I will find means of turning matters in the way you wish."

I thanked the venerable lieutenant of the birds and ran to hide myself behind the trees, while he retired into his pavilion to receive his subjects.

After I had waited a long time, I heard a beating of wings and laughter in the air, and saw the three doves alight on the rim of the basin and cast bright glances to left and right to see if they were unobserved. The one who had before spoken to me turned to the others, saying: "My sisters, do you not think that someone is hidden in the garden? What has become of the young man whom we saw here before?" "Oh, Shamsa," answered the two, "do not worry yourself about that, but come and bathe." Then all three cast off their feathers and dived into the water, where they played so sweetly that I seemed to see three naked moons of virgin silver reflected in the fountain.

I waited until they had swum well out to the centre of the basin and then, darting forward more quickly than light itself, took possession of the mantle of the girl I loved. My movement of depredation was answered by three frightened cries, and I saw the girls,

ashamed at being overlooked in their pleasantry, dive so that only their heads appeared above the water and hurry towards me with imploring looks. This time, sure of the mastery, I laughed, drawing back from the rim and victoriously waving the feathered garment in the air. Seeing this, Shamsa, the young girl who had first spoken to me, said: "O young man, how dare you take what does not belong to you?" "My dove," I answered, "come up out of the basin and talk to me." "I would like to talk to you, fair youth," she said, "but I am quite naked and cannot come out of the water. Give me my mantle and I will then come up and speak to you; I will even let you caress me and embrace me as much as you wish." "O light of my heart, mistress, queen of beauty, fruit of my life," I answered, "if I gave back to you your cloak, I would be stabbing myself with my own hand. I certainly cannot do so until my friend, the venerable lieutenant of the birds, comes to this place." Then she said: "Since it was only my mantle which you took, go a little further off and turn away your head, so that my sisters can come up out of the basin and clothe themselves. Then they will lend me some of their feathers to hide what is most necessary." "That I can do," I answered; and hid myself behind the ruby throne.

The two older girls left the water and quickly put on their mantles; then they pulled out some of their most downy feathers and made them into a little apron with which they hid the essential parts of their young sister. "Now you may come!" they cried; so at once I ran to them and, throwing myself down before my dear Shamsa, kissed her feet again and again, being careful to keep firm hold of her garment all the time. She lifted me to my feet and, with a thousand gentle words and pleasant caresses, tried to cajole me to re-

turn her covering; but, instead of doing so, I managed to pull her towards the ruby throne, where I sat down and took her upon my knees.

Seeing that she could not escape, she answered to my desires and, throwing her arms about my neck, gave me kiss for kiss and clasp for clasp; while the sisters smiled upon us and kept guard that we might not be surprised..

In a short time the old man, my protector, opened the door and came in; we rose in his honour and, going forward to meet him, kissed his hands respectfully. Begging us to seat ourselves again, he said to Shamsa: "My daughter, I am delighted that you have chosen this young man who adores you so. He is of illustrious origin; his father is King Tigmus, lord of Afghanistan. You will do well to accept the alliance and to persuade your father, King Nasr, to give his consent to it." "I hear and obey," she said; and the old man continued: "If you truly accept this youth, swear to me to be faithful to your husband and never to abandon him." The beautiful Shamsa rose then, and made her oath between the hands of the old man, who said to us: "Let us thank the Highest for your union, my children. I call down blessings upon you both; may you be happy! Now you may love each other freely and Janshah can give back the mantle, for Shamsa will never leave him." So saying, the sheikh led us into a hall where there were mattresses covered with carpets, and dishes filled with select fruit and exquisite refreshments. Begging her sisters to go before and announce to their father her marriage and speedy return, Shamsa with great sweetness of manner, prepared the fruits and shared them with me. After that we lay down together in each other's arms with an excess of joy.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHAMSA WAS FIRST AFOOT next morning. She put on her feather mantle and then woke me with a kiss between the eyes, saying: "Dress yourself quickly, for it is time that we went to the palace of diamonds to see my father, King Nasr." I did as she had told me and, after we had presented ourselves before the lieutenant of the birds and kissed his hands with abundant thanks, Shamsa said: "Now, climb upon my shoulders and hold tightly, for the journey is rather long and I mean to go with all possible swiftness." When I was well fixed on her shoulders, she carried me through the air with the speed of light and, in a short time, set me down near the entrance to the palace of diamonds. Then we walked slowly towards the dwelling, while servant Jinn, who had been placed on the look-out, ran forward to announce our arrival.

King Nasr, Shamsa's father and master of the Jinn, was delighted to see me; he took me in his arms and pressed me to his bosom; then he ordered me to be clothed in a magnificent robe of honour, put upon my head a crown wrought out of a single diamond, and introduced me to his queen, the mother of my wife, who congratulated her daughter on the choice which she had made. She gave Shamsa a vast quantity of diamonds and led both of us to the hammam, where we were washed and perfumed with rose, musk, amber,

and scented oils. Finally feasts, which lasted three days and three nights, were given in our honour.

When I desired to take my wife and show her to my father and mother, the king and queen approved my wish, though they were sad indeed to be parted from their daughter and made me promise to return for a part of each year to visit them. The king had made for us a throne so vast that two hundred male Jinn and two hundred females might stand upon the steps of it. When all was completed, we sat upon the throne and, after four hundred picked attendants had ranged themselves upon the steps, a whole army of the Jinn lifted up the throne and carried it through the air so quickly that in two days we had covered a two years' foot journey and reached the palace of my father in Kabul.

When my father and mother saw me arrive, after so a long an absence that hope had died in it, and had seen my wife and learnt who she was and how I had come to marry her, they wept for joy, embracing us both over and over again. My poor mother was even so moved that she fell down in a swoon and was only recovered by the use of rose-water of which my wife happened to have a large flask.

After all the feasts of rejoicing which attended our arrival and marriage were well finished, my father asked Shamsa what he could do to please her and, because her tastes were modest, she answered: "O auspicious king, I wish only that we may have a pavilion in the middle of a garden watered by streams." The king gave orders and, in a very short time, we were installed in such a pavilion as my wife desired and lived there in perfect happiness.

At the end of a year, passed as it were upon a summer sea of all delight, my wife wished to see her

father and mother again in the palace of diamonds and reminded me of my promise that we should visit them every year. Loving her as I did, I had nothing to say against this project, but alas, alas! it was an evil journey which we undertook.

We mounted our throne and our porter Jinn carried us swiftly through the air, so that we passed over a month's journey every day. At night we did not travel; but had ourselves set down to rest by some water-course or in the shadow of trees. One evening we halted in such a place and Shamsa wished to bathe in the waters of a river which flowed near. I tried to dissuade her, telling her that the evening was too cold and that illness would come of it; but she did not wish to hear me and took certain of her slaves to bathe with her. They undressed upon the bank and went down into the river, where Shamsa seemed like the rising moon among a train of stars. They played happily together until suddenly my wife cried out and fell back into the arms of her slaves, who hastened to lift her from the water and carry her up on to the bank. I spoke to her and would have cared for her but she was dead. The women showed me the bite of a water snake upon her heel.

I fell down in a faint and stayed so long without consciousness that they thought me also dead; but, alas, I was fated to live on and to mourn for Shamsa and to build this tomb for her. This other tomb is my own; I have built it beside the resting place of my beloved and here I try to pass away the cruel time in tears and memories, until I may at last sleep by Shamsa, far from the kingdom which I have renounced, far from the desert of the world.

When the fair sad youth had finished telling this

tale to Bulukiya, he hid his face in his hands and wept. Then said the other young king: "As Allah lives, my brother, your story is so strange and wonderful that it has made me forget my own adventures which, so short a time ago, I thought were marvellous. May He sustain you in your grief, my brother, and, as the years go by, enrich your spirit with forgetfulness."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE STAYED WITH the mourner for a further hour, trying in vain to persuade him to come with him to his kingdom. Then he took leave of him, for fear of seeming importunate and, after having kissed him with words of consolation, followed the road to his capital, which he reached without accident after having been absent for five years.

Since then I have had no news of young King Bulukiya. Now that you are here, O Hasib, I quite forget him and the hope which I once had that he would return to me. You at least will not leave me so quickly and I trust to enjoy your company for many years. You may be sure that I will not let you lack for anything; also I know many other extraordinary tales to tell you which will make those of King Bulukiya and the Fair Sad Youth seem simple every-day affairs. As a proof that you have pleased me by listening so well, my women will now serve us a feast and charm us with their singing until the morning.

When Queen Yamlika of under earth had finished telling the tales of Bulukiya and the Fair Sad Youth to young Hasib, son of Daniel the sage, and when the feasting and the singing and the dancing of the serpent-women were ended, preparations were made for the whole assembly to return to the Summer residence of the queen; but Hasib, who dearly loved his mother and his wife, said: "O queen, I am only a poor woodcutter and yet, though you offer me a life of delights with you, I have a wife and a mother in my house at home. As Allah lives, I cannot leave them longer in the anxiety and despair which they must feel. Therefore let me return to them before they die of grief. One thing I can say with certainty: all my life I will regret not having heard the other tales with which you had meant to charm my stay!"

Queen Yamlika realised that Hasib's determination was right, so she said to him: "O Hasib, I am willing to let you return to your mother and wife, although it will cost me pain to depart from so excellent a listener as yourself; but I exact an oath from you and, if you do not swear it, I shall not let you go. You must promise me never to take a bath in a hammam during all the remainder of your life; if you break your promise you will infallibly be lost. For the moment I cannot tell you more."

Though Hasib was astonished at this condition, he took the oath because he did not wish to go against the wishes of the queen. When he had done so, she said farewell to him and sent one of her snake-women to lead him to that way out of her kingdom which was hidden by a ruined house and which lay in the opposite direction from the honey-pit by which he had come in.

The sun was yellowing in the east when Hasib knocked at the door of his house. His mother opened

the door, recognised him and, uttering a great cry, threw herself into his arms weeping for joy. His wife, hearing the cries and happy sobs of the older woman, ran also to the door and respectfully kissed her husband's hands. All three went back into the house and abandoned themselves to transports of the liveliest joy.

When they became calmer, Hasib asked news of the woodcutters, his old comrades who had left him in the honey hole. His mother told him that, after they had informed her of his death at the teeth of a wolf, they had become rich merchants, owners of large and beautiful shops, and had seen the world widening before their gaze as the days passed over them.

Hasib reflected for a little and then said to his mother: "Tomorrow you must go to the market and, calling them all together, tell them of my return and inform them that I shall be pleased to see them." On the next day, Hasib's mother did this thing and the woodcutters, after changing colour, answered that they would be delighted to visit Hasib and welcome him back among them. Then they planned together and, in order to put the best possible face on his return, loaded Hasib's mother with the rarest silks and brocades which they had in their shops and, on their way to the house, agreed that each should give Hasib a share of their riches, slaves, and houses. They saluted the young man and kissed his hands, begging him to accept their offer and forget the wrong which they had done him. Not wishing to bear malice, Hasib accepted their gifts and said: "The past is past and what happened must have been fated to happen." They took leave of him with many expressions of gratitude and, from that day, Hasib was a rich man. He opened a merchant's shop in the market which, in the

course of time, became the most elegant building in the city.

One day, as he was walking to his shop, he passed by the hammam which stood at the entrance to the market. The owner of the bath was taking the air in front of his door; seeing Hasib, he saluted him and said: "Honour me by entering my bath; for I have never had the pleasure of a visit from you. Today I wish to entertain you for my own pleasure; the rubbers shall rub you with a new hair glove and soap you with fibres of loofah which never have been used before." "As Allah lives, I cannot accept your offer," answered Hasib, remembering his oath, "for I have made a vow never to enter the hammam."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MASTER OF the hammam, not believing that anyone could have taken such an oath, since, at the risk of death itself, no man may omit to bathe before he approaches his wife sexually, cried out: "O master, why do you refuse me? As Allah lives, I swear in my turn that, if you will not be persuaded, I shall at once divorce my three wives. I swear it three times by divorce!" In spite of this most serious undertaking, Hasib would not accept; so the master of the bath threw himself down before the young man, begging him not to make the performance of the oath necessary. He kissed his feet weeping, and said: "I take

upon myself the responsibility and consequences of your act." Then all the passers who had crowded round them on hearing what was toward, also began to beg Hasib not to bring down unmerited misfortune on a man who offered him a free bath. Soon, seeing the uselessness of their prayers, they determined to employ force. In spite of his terrified cries, they bore Hasib into the hammam, pulled off all his clothes, and poured twenty or thirty basins of water over his body; rubbed him, soaped him, dried him and wrapping him about with hot towels, enveloped his head in a large embroidered covering. The owner of the bath, rejoicing to see himself quit of his oath, brought Hasib a cup of sherbert perfumed with amber, and said to him: "May the bath be light and healthful upon you! May this drink refresh you as much as you have refreshed me!" Hasib, who was more and more terrified as time went on, did not know whether to accept or refuse this last invitation; he was about to answer when the hammam was suddenly filled with the king's guards, who threw themselves upon him, took him up, covered just as he was from the bath, and, in spite of all protestations and resistance, carried him to the king's palace, where they left him in the hands of the grand-wazir, who was impatiently awaiting them at the door.

When he saw Hasib, the wazir rejoiced exceedingly and, greeting him with singular marks of respect, begged him to go with him to the king. Hasib, who was now resolved to let his destiny run its course, followed the wazir into the hall where were ranged, in hierarchic order, two thousand governors of provinces, two thousand chief officers, and two thousand executioners with swords, who waited but a sign to send heads flying. The king himself lay upon a large

gold bed, his head and face covered with silk, and seemed to sleep.

Terrified at these strange sights, Hasib thought that he would die; falling at the foot of the bed, he publicly protested his innocence, though he did not know of what he was accused. The wazir hastened to lift him up most respectfully, and said to him: "O son of Daniel, we wait for you to save our king, mighty Karazdan. A mortal leprosy covers his face and body; we have determined that you shall cure him, as you are the son of Daniel the sage." At this all the governors, chamberlains, officers, and executioners, cried out with one voice: "By you alone shall King Karazdan be saved!"

"As Allah lives," said the terrified Hasib to himself, "they take me for a sage!" Then he continued aloud to the wazir: "It is true that I am the son of Daniel; but I am very ignorant. They put me to school but I learnt nothing; they tried to teach me medicine, but, at the end of a month, I gave it up because my instructor was not a good one. At length my mother bought me an ass and some ropes, and made a woodcutter of me. That is all the learning I have." But the wazir answered: "O son of Daniel, it is useless to hide your knowledge any further. We know perfectly well that, if we searched east and west, we would not find your equal as a practitioner of medicine." "But, O wisest of wazirs," cried poor Hasib, "how can I cure the king when I know nothing of either disease or remedy?" "These denials are useless, young man," retorted the wazir, "we know that the king's cure lies in your hands." "How so?" exclaimed Hasib, lifting his arms to the sky; and then the wazir said: "You can obtain the cure because you are acquainted with Queen Yamlika, the princess of

under earth, whose virgin milk, taken fasting or used as a balm, can cure incurable disease.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASIB THEN UNDERSTOOD that his entrance into the hammam had betrayed him; in an attempt to deny the fault, he cried: “I have never seen this milk, my master; I have never heard the name of Yamlika before; I do not know who she is.” “Since you insist,” answered the wazir smiling, “I will explain why your denial is useless. I know that you have been in the presence of Queen Yamlika; for all who have visited her since ancient time have returned with black skin upon their bellies; but the skin does not become black until the visitor of Queen Yamlika has entered the hammam. This I know from a learned book. Now the spies, whom I had posted in the hammam to examine the bellies of all bathers, came to me a short time ago and told me that your belly turned black while you were having a bath. Do not palter with me any further.”

“Even so,” Hasib insisted, “as Allah lives, I never saw this princess!” At once the wazir came up to him and, baring his belly of the towels, showed that it was black as that of a buffalo.

Hasib nearly fainted at this exposure; but, wishing to try one last expedient, he said: “I must confess that I was born with a black belly.” “It was not black

when you entered the hammam," cried the wazir, with a laugh, "my spies assured me of that!" At length, as Hasib would not betray the queen by telling where she lived and continued to swear that he had never seen her, the wazir signed to two of the executioners, who immediately stretched out Hasib upon the ground, naked as he was, and rained blows upon the soles of his feet so violently that he would have died if he had not cried for mercy and promised to tell the truth.

At once the wazir raised him up and ordered the towels to be replaced by a magnificent robe of honour; then he himself led the young man into the courtyard and, providing him with the finest horse in the royal stable, mounted his own charger. The two set forth, followed by a troop of attendants, and made their way to the ruined house through which Hasib had left the kingdom of Queen Yamlika.

There the wazir, who had learnt the art of magic from books, burnt certain perfumes and pronounced conjurations at the doors, while Hasib, acting under orders, besought the queen to show herself. Suddenly a trembling seized the earth, which threw most of those who were there to the ground, and a hole opened through which appeared, borne in her gold basin by four snakes with human heads breathing out fire, Queen Yamlika herself, her face shining like gold. She looked reproachfully at Hasib, saying: "Is it thus that you keep the oath you swore to me?" "As Allah lives, O queen," cried Hasib, "the fault lies with the wazir, who had me nearly killed with blows." "I know it," she answered, "and that is why I will not punish you. You were forced to come here and I myself was forced to appear, because it is necessary to cure the king. You come to ask me for milk with which to perform that cure; I will give it to you in

memory of my hospitality and the excellent attention which you paid to my tales. Here are two flasks of my milk; I will tell you how to use them if you come near to me." Hasib approached, and the queen said to him in a voice so low that no one else might hear: "One of the flasks, which is marked with a red spot, will cure the king; the other is for the wazir who had you beaten. When he sees that the king is cured, he will wish to drink my milk himself, in order to be immune from all disease; then you must give him the second flask." When she had said this, Queen Yamlika handed the two flasks to Hasib and at once disappeared, the earth closing over her and her attendants.

As soon as Hasib came to the palace, he did exactly as the queen had told him; he went up to the king, and made him drink of the first flask. No sooner had the sick man tasted the milk than all his body began to sweat and, in a few minutes, the leprous skin began to fall away in flakes and, in its place, there grew a skin as new and pure as silver. Then the wazir, wishing to drink the milk also, took the second flask and emptied it at a draught. Immediately he began to swell up and when, little by little, he had expanded until he was as large as an elephant, he suddenly burst in all directions and died upon the spot. The remains were taken out and buried.

When the king saw that he was really cured, he made Hasib sit by his side and, after overwhelming him with thanks, appointed him grand-wazir in the place of him who had died. A robe of honour heavy with diamonds was put upon him and his appointment was cried throughout all the palace; then he was given three hundred mamelukes, three hundred girls for secret women, and three princesses of royal blood; so

that he had four wives. Also he was presented with three hundred thousand dinars of gold, three hundred mules, three hundred camels, and vast herds of buffaloes, oxen and sheep.

At an order from the king, who said: "Who honours me will honour him!" all the officers, chamberlains, and nobles came up to Hasib and kissed his hand, assuring him of their submission and respect. Without delay, the young man took possession of the dead wazir's palace, and lived there with his mother, his wives, and his favourites, for many rich and honoured years, during which he had the leisure to learn to read and write.

As soon as he had mastered these two arts, he recalled that his father Daniel had been a very learned man and, more from curiosity than anything else, asked his mother if there was no legacy awaiting him of books and manuscripts. "My son," the mother answered, "before he died your father destroyed all his papers and all his manuscripts, leaving as your sole inheritance a little sheet of paper which he commanded me to give you when you asked for it." "I wish very much to see it," exclaimed Hasib, "for now I am eager for learning that I may better direct the affairs of the kingdom."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASIB'S MOTHER HASTENED to take the small piece of paper from a box where she had hidden it with her

jewels and, returning with the legacy left by Daniel the wise, gave it to Hasib who took it and unrolled it on the spot. This is what he read: "All learning is vain; for the times are now at hand when the Elect of Allah shall show the fountain of all Wisdom to his people. His name shall be called Muhamad! Upon him, upon his companions, and upon all Believers be blessing and peace until the death of time!"

Such, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, is the tale of Hasib, son of Daniel, and of Queen Yamlika, princess under earth.

But Allah knows more!

When Shahrazade had finished the telling of this strange tale, King Shahryar suddenly cried: "I feel a great weariness of spirit, O Shahrazade. Be very careful; for if this state of things continues, I verily believe that tomorrow morning your head will fall one way and your body another!" Terrified at these words, little Doniazade hid herself still further among her carpets; but Shahrazade calmly answered: "In that case, O auspicious King, I will now tell you one or two little stories to pass the rest of the night. As for the morrow, Allah knows all!" Then said King Shahryar: "How can you possibly find for me a tale which is at once short and amusing?" "O auspicious King," answered Shahrazade with a smile, "that is the kind of tale which I know best. I will begin at once to repeat a few anecdotes drawn from the Flowering Terrace of Wit and from the Garden of Gallantry. After that, I am willing to have my head cut off."

At once she continued:

*THE FLOWERING TERRACE OF
WIT AND GARDEN OF GALLANTRY*

AL-RACHID AND THE FART

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, being once taken with weariness and finding himself in the same state of spirit which your majesty suffers at this moment, walked out upon the road which leads from Baghdad to Bassora, taking with him his wazir, Giafar Al-Barmaki, his favourite musician, Abu Ishak, and Abu Nowas, the poet.

As the khalifat went along with sombre eyes and compressed lips, an old man passed by mounted upon an ass. Haroun Al-Rachid turned to Giafar, saying: "Ask that old man where he is going." The wazir, who up to that moment had been cudgelling his brains in vain for some distraction which might please the khalifat, resolved to amuse him at the expense of the aged traveller, who was jogging along with the cord loose upon his donkey's neck. Therefore he went up to him and asked: "Whither away, old man?" "I journey from Bassora to Baghdad," the other answered. "Why have you undertaken so long a journey?" demanded Giafar; and the traveller replied: "As Allah lives, I wish to find some learned doctor in Baghdad who will give me a collyrium for my eyes." Then said Giafar: "Chance and cure are in the hands of Allah, O sheikh. What will you give me if I save you expense and time, by myself prescribing a remedy which will cure your eyes in one night?" "Allah alone could reward such kindness," murmured the old man. Hearing this, Giafar turned to the khalifat and Abu Nowas with a wink, and then said to the traveller: "Since that is so, good uncle, carefully remember the

following simple prescription: Take three ounces of the breath of the wind, three ounces of sun rays, three ounces of moon rays, and three ounces of lamp rays; mix them carefully in a bottomless mortar and expose them to the air for three months. For a further three months, pound the mixture, and then pour it into a porringer with holes in the bottom and leave it in the sun for another three months. By that time the cure will be ready and you only have to apply it three hundred times to your eyes on the first night, using three large pinches of it each time, to wake in the morning absolutely cured if Allah wills."

Hearing these words, the old man bent over flat on his belly on the ass in front of Giafar, in sign of gratitude and respect, and suddenly made a tremendous explosion, followed by loud eructation, saying at the same time: "Be quick and gather these up, O learned doctor, before they are quite vanished, for they are the sole payment which I have about me for your windy remedy. Be sure, however, that when I return to my own country, I will at once send you a female slave, with lips as ruddled as a ripe fig, who will give you such delight that you will die of it. Her grief, also, will be so great that, as she weeps over you, she will spit on your cold face and water your dry beard."

Then the old man touched up his ass and went on his way, while the khalifat fell over on his backside and strangled with laughter as he looked at the expression of his wazir, standing there surprised, embarrassed and without an answer. As for Abu Nowas, he made extravagant signs of congratulation, as a father would proudly commend the cleverness of a child.

As soon as he heard this anecdote, King Shahryar's

sombre face broke into smiles, and he said to Shahrazade: "O Shahrazade, tell me another tale at least as amusing as the last!" "O Shahrazade," cried little Doniazade, "how sweet and savoury are your words, my sister!" So, after a short silence, Shahrazade said:

THE YOUTH AND HIS MASTER

IT IS RELATED that the wazir Badreddin, governor of Yaman, had a young brother, whose beauty was so incomparable that both men and women would stop and turn when he passed them and stand bathing their eyes in the charm of his appearance. The wazir, who feared that some untimely adventure might come to so fair a being, kept him far from the regard of men and prevented him from companionship with lads of his own age. Not wishing to send him to school where he might not be sufficiently watched, he had a venerable and pious old man, whose manners were notoriously chaste, come to the house as tutor. This old man visited every day and was shut up for many hours together with the pupil in a room which the wazir had set aside for the lessons.

It was not long before the beauty and seduction of the boy had their usual effect; after a few days, the old man was so violently in love with his young charge that he heard all the birds singing again in his soul, and, at their singing, something woke which had long slept.

Knowing no other way to master this feeling, he opened his heart to the boy and assured him that he could no longer live without him. "Alas," said the youth, who was deeply touched by the emotion of his teacher, "my hands are tied and every minute of my

time is watched over by my brother." The old man sighed and said: "How I long to pass an evening alone with you!" "You may well say so," retorted the other, "If my days are so well guarded, what do you think is done about my nights?" "I know, I know," said the old man, "but the terrace of my house joins the terrace of this; it should be easy, when your brother is asleep, to climb up noiselessly on to your terrace where I will meet you and lead you over the little barrier wall on to my terrace. No one can spy on us there."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

Said King Shahryar to himself: "I will not kill her until I know what passed between the youth and his master!"

*So When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE YOUTH ACCEPTED the invitation. He pretended to go to sleep that night, but, as soon as his brother the wazir had retired, climbed on to the terrace where the old man was waiting for him. The sage led him by the hand over the boundary wall on to his own terrace, where fruits and filled wine cups were arranged for his entertainment. They sat down on a white mat in the moonlight and began to drink and sing together, the clear night aiding and inspiring them and the stars' soft rays lighting them on to ecstasy.

As the time was thus passing pleasantly, the wazir Badreddin took it into his head to visit his young

brother, before lying down himself to sleep, and was mightily astonished not to find him. After searching the whole house, he went up on to the terrace and, approaching the boundary wall, saw his brother and the old man sitting side by side with wine cups in their hands. As good luck would have it, the old man had, on his side, noticed the approach of the wazir and, having a ready tact, he broke off the song on which he was engaged and improvised a stanza so adroitly that it appeared to belong to the original:

*His mouth graced the cup with his spittle
Before it met mine,
And the shame of his cheek dimmed a little
The red of the wine. . . .*

*His excellent brother, the Full Moon of Duty,
Can hardly object
If I call this sweet other the Full Moon of Beauty
Serene and unflecked.*

When the wazir Badreddin heard this delicate allusion, being a discreet and very gallant man, and also seeing nothing improper between the two, he retired, saying to himself: "As Allah lives, I will not trouble their festivity." So the couple continued their evening in perfect happiness.

Having told this anecdote, Shahrazade paused for a moment, and then said:

THE WONDERFUL BAG

IT IS RELATED that one night, when the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid was plagued with sleeplessness, he called to him Giafar his wazir, saying: "O Giafar, tonight my breast is heavy for lack of sleep. I charge

you with the lightening of it." "Commander of the Faithful," answered Giafar, "I have a friend called Ali the Persian, who has in his scrip many delicious tales which are sovereign remedies for the blackest humours and annoyances." "Bring him to me at once," said Al-Rachid; and when Giafar had obeyed and the man was seated in the presence, he continued: "Listen, Ali, I am told that you know stories which can dissipate weariness and bring sleep to the sleepless. I require one of them now." "I hear and I obey, O Prince of Believers," answered Ali the Persian. "I pray you tell me whether you wish a story of things heard or a tale of things seen with my own eyes?" "One in which you have taken part yourself," said Haroun Al-Rachid; so Ali the Persian began:

I was sitting one day in my shop, when a Kurd came up and began bargaining with me for certain of my goods; suddenly he took up a little bag and, without attempting to hide it, tried most openly to walk off with it, as if it had belonged to him ever since he was born. I jumped out into the street and, stopping him by the skirts of his robe, told him to give me back my bag. He only shrugged his shoulders, saying: "That bag, and all that is in it, belongs to me." In rising anger, I cried out: "O Mussulmans, save my goods from this wretched unbeliever!" and at once all who were in the market crowded round us and my fellow merchants advised me to lay a complaint before the kadi without further delay. I agreed to this, and immediately willing hands helped me to drag the Kurd, who had stolen my bag, into the presence of the kadi. As we all stood respectfully before him, he asked: "Which of you is the plaintiff and which the defendant?" Without giving me time to open my mouth, the

Kurd stepped forward, crying: "Allah increase the power of our master the kadi! This bag is my bag, and all that it contains belongs to me! I lost it and then found it again on this man's counter." "When did you lose it?" asked the kadi. "I lost it yesterday," answered the impudent fellow, "and I could not sleep all night for thinking of it." "In that case," said the judge, "give me a list of its contents." Without a moment's hesitation, the Kurd answered: "O kadi, there are in my bag two crystal flasks filled with kohl, two silver sticks for putting on kohl, a handkerchief, two lemonade glasses with gilded rims, two torches, two ladles, a cushion, two carpets for gaming tables, two water pots, two basins, one dish, one cooking pot, one earthen water jar, one kitchen dipper, one large knitting needle, two provision sacks, a pregnant cat, two bitches, a rice jar, two donkeys, two bedroom sets for women, a linen garment, two pelisses, a cow, two calves, a sheep with two lambs, a camel with two little camels, two racing dromedaries with their females, a buffalo and two oxen, a lioness and two lions, a female bear, two foxes, one couch, two beds, a palace with two reception halls, two green tents, two canopies, a kitchen with two doors, and an assembly of Kurds of my own kind all ready to swear that the bag is my bag."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN THE KADI turned to me, saying: "What answer have you to this?"

I was so astonished by what the Kurd had said, O

Commander of the Faithful, that it was a little time before I was able to advance and answer: "May Allah lift up and honour our master the kadi! I know that, in my sack, there are only a ruined pavilion, a house without a kitchen, a large dog kennel, a boys' school, some jolly young fellows playing dice, a brigand's lair, an army with captains, the city of Bassora and the city of Baghdad, the ancient palace of the emir Shaddad son of Ad, a smith's furnace, a fishing net, a shepherd's crook, five pretty boys, twelve untouched girls, and a thousand leaders of caravans all ready to bear witness that this bag is my bag."

When the Kurd had heard my answer, he burst into tears and cried between his sobs: "O our master the kadi, my bag is known and well known; it is universally acknowledged to be my property. Besides those things which I mentioned before, it contains: two fortified cities and ten towers, two alchemical alembics, four chess players, a mare and two foals, a stallion and two geldings, two long lances, two hares, a charming boy and two pimps, a blind man and two far-seeing men, a lame man and two paralytics, a sea captain, a ship with sailors, a Christian priest and two deacons, a patriarch and two monks, and a kadi and two witnesses ready to swear that this bag is my bag." Then the kadi turned to me again, and said: "What answer have you to all that?"

Being filled with hot rage, even to my nose, O Commander of the Faithful, I advanced and replied as calmly as I could: "Allah lighten and make strong the judgment of our master kadi! I ought to add that there are in the bag besides the things which I have already mentioned: headache cures, firtres and enchantments, coats of mail and armouries filled with

arms, a thousand rams trained for fighting, a deer park, men who love women, boy fanciers, gardens filled with trees and flowers, vines loaded with grapes, apples and figs, shades and phantoms, flasks and cups, new married couples with all their marriage fresh about them, cries and jokes, twelve disgraceful farts and as many odourless funks, friends sitting in a meadow, banners and flags, a bride coming out of the bath, twenty singers, five fair Abyssinian slaves, three Indian women, four Greek women, fifty Turkish women, seven Persian women, forty women from Kashmir, eighty Kurdish women, as many Chinese women, ninety women from Georgia, the land of Irak, the Earthly Paradise, two stables, a mosque, many hammams, a hundred merchants, a plank, a nail, a black man playing on the clarinet, a thousand dinars, twenty chests full of stuffs, twenty dancers, fifty store houses, the city of Kufa, the city of Gaza, Damietta, Al-Sawan, the palace of Kisra Anushirwan, the palace of Sulayman, all the lands between Balkh and Ispahan, the Indies and Soudan, Baghdad and Khorasan, and—may Allah preserve the days of our master the kadi—a shroud, a coffin, and a razor for the beard of the kadi if the kadi does not recognize my rights and say that this bag is my bag!”

When he had heard all this, the kadi looked at us and said: “As Allah lives, either you are two rascals mocking at the law and its representatives, or else this bag is a bottomless abyss or the Valley of the Day of Judgment itself.”

Finally, to see which of us had spoken the truth, the kadi opened the bag before his witnesses and found in it a little orange peel and some olive stones.

At once I told the flabbergasted kadi that the bag

must belong to the Kurd and that mine had disappeared. Then I went my way.

When the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid heard this tale, he was knocked over on his backside by the explosive force of his laughter. He gave a magnificent present to Ali the Persian, and that night slept soundly until the morning.

But do not believe, O auspicious King, added Shahrazade, that this little tale is more delicious than one in which Al-Rachid finds himself in an embarrassing predicament because of love. "I do not know that tale. What is it?" cried King Shahryar; so Shahrazade said:

AL-RACHID JUDGES OF LOVE

IT IS RELATED that one night Haroun Al-Rachid, being with two fair girls whom he loved equally and of whom one was from Medina and the other from Kufa, did not wish to decide with whom he should spend the evening, especially since, if one gained the other would have to lose.

Therefore he decided that the honour would be bestowed upon her who would win it. At once the slave from Medina clasped his hands and began to caress them gently; while the one from Kufa began to rub Haroun Al-Rachid's feet. They continued thus for some minutes, dividing the honours of attention equally between them. Then, however, she of Kufa made bold and sudden advances which were not unpleasing to the khalifat but sorely vexed the woman from Medina. The girl from Medina, becoming apprised of what was taking place, thought how she might wrest the Kufa slave from her supremacy.

First she tried soft words and sweet sayings, pointing out the bounden duty of him who hath to share with him who hath not. But the girl from Kufa remained silent and continued her ministrations to the khalifat.

Then, with a quick movement, the Medina woman thrust away her of Kufa and gained the disputed capital from which each sought due interest.

The cheated slave, who was deeply learned in the traditions of the Prophet, said to the other: "I have a right to the capital, according to these words of the prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!): He who makes the dead earth live again shall own it for himself!" But the slave from Medina, who was no less versed in the Book than her rival, kept hold of the merchandise and answered: "The capital belongs to me, according to these words of the Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!): Game shall belong, not to him who starts it, but to him who kills it."

When the khalifat heard these quotations, he considered them so much to the point that he satisfied both the girls on that one night.

But, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, none of these short tales is so excellent as that of the two women who argued as to whether a youth or a ripe man were better for the deed of love.

WHICH IS THE BETTER? A YOUTH OR A RIPE MAN?

THE FOLLOWING ANECDOTE is told by Abu Al-Ayna, who says:

One evening I went up on to my terrace to take the air and heard a conversation between women on the adjoining terrace.

Not dreaming that they could be overheard, the two women were discussing the respective merits of their lovers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SAID ONE OF THEM: "Sister, how can you bear the roughness of your lover's beard when you kiss him? Surely it must scratch your breasts, and the points of his moustaches stick into your lips and cheeks? How can you prevent yourself being cruelly cut to pieces each time? Take my advice, change lovers and do as I do; find some boy whose cheeks are downy and desirable as a fruit, whose delicate flesh melts in the mouth under your kisses! As Allah lives, you will discover many savoury things about him to console you for the beard."

The other answered: "My sister, you are a fool; you have neither intelligence nor taste. Do you not know that a tree is only beautiful when it has leaves, and a cucumber only savoury when it is coarse and pimpled on the outside? Is there anything more ugly in the world than a man beardless and bald as an artichoke? A beard and moustaches are to a man what long hair is to a woman. This is a fact so evident that Allah (glorify Him!) appointed one angel in Heaven with no other work than to praise the Creator for having given beards to men and long hair to women. And yet you tell me to choose a beardless boy for my lover!

Do you think that I would ever submit to the caresses of a beardless youth, so pink and white, so slender voiced, so delicately formed that one almost thinks he is a girl; so shy and young that he blushes and trembles at an outspoken word; so inexperienced and unknowing that he fumbles at the mere removal of his turban? Why such a fellow would make my very soul shake with laughter and my heart fill with pity. I would not know what to do with such a suckling, whether to whip him for his naughty thoughts and send him home to his father's house, or to feed him rose conserve and play children's games with him upon the floor. Undeceive yourself, my sister! I will never leave a man who knows the worth of a caress, whose mastery is no idle word, who is as a strong tree in a forest."

Hearing such wisdom, the lover of the beardless boy exclaimed: "By the Master of the holy Kaaba, my sister, you make me inclined to the excellencies of a bearded man!"

After a short silence Shahrazade continued:

THE PRICE OF CUCUMBERS

ONE DAY, WHILE the emir Muyin bin Zayda was out hunting, he met an Arab mounted upon an ass coming across the desert. He rode up and saluted him, saying: "Where are you going; O brother Arab, and what is it that you carry so carefully rolled up in that little sack?" "I go to find the emir Muyin," answered the Arab, "to carry him some cucumbers which have come up before their time on my land and are its first fruits. He is the most generous man in the kingdom and I am sure he will pay me a worthy price for my cucumbers." The emir, whom the Arab had never seen before, asked him how much he expected to be

paid for the cucumbers, and the other answered: "At least a thousand dinars of gold."

"And if the emir says that is too much?"

"I will only ask five hundred."

"And if he says that is too much?"

"I will only ask three hundred."

"And if he says that is too much?"

"One hundred."

"And if he says that is too much?"

"Fifty."

"And if he says that is too much?"

"Thirty."

"And if he says that is still too much?"

"I will drive my ass into his harem and run away."

Muyin laughed heartily at this and, spurring his horse, rejoined his followers. Then, without a moment's delay, he returned to his palace and ordered his chamberlain to admit the Arab when he should come with the cucumbers.

An hour later, the man arrived with his bag, and the chamberlain led him at once into the reception hall where the emir Muyin waited him, in the midst of all the majesty of his court and surrounded by guards with naked swords. The Arab, who did not at all recognise, among so much grandeur, the horseman whom he had met upon his way, stood with the sack of cucumbers in his hand, waiting to be questioned. "What do you bring me in that sack, O brother Arab?" the emir enquired; and the man replied: "Trusting in the liberality of our master the emir, I have brought him the first young cucumbers which grew in my field."

"An excellent idea! And what do you think my liberality is worth?"

"A thousand dinars."

"That is a little too much."

"Five hundred."

"Too much."

"Three hundred."

"Too much."

"One hundred."

"Too much."

"Fifty."

"Too much."

"Thirty, then."

"Still too much."

Then cried the Arab: "As Allah lives, it was an unlucky meeting I had in the desert with that foul-faced man! O emir, I cannot let my cucumbers go at less than thirty dinars!"

The emir smiled and did not answer; so that the Arab looked at him more closely and, recognising him as the man he had met in the desert, exclaimed: "As Allah lives, my master, let the thirty dinars be brought; for my ass is fastened just outside the door." The emir was taken with such a gust of laughing that he fell over on his backside; when he was a little recovered, he called his intendant, saying: "Count out immediately to this our brother, the Arab, first a thousand dinars, then five hundred, then three hundred, then one hundred, then fifty, and finally thirty, to induce him to leave his ass tied up where it is." I need not say that the Arab was stupefied at receiving one thousand, nine hundred and eighty dinars for a little sack of cucumbers. Such was the liberality of the emir Muyin. May the mercy of Allah be upon all concerned for ever!

THEN SHAHRAZADE SAID:

WHITE HAIR

ABU SUWAYD TELLS THIS STORY:

One day I went into an orchard to buy fruit and saw, far off, a woman sitting in the shade of an apricot tree and combing her hair. Going nearer I perceived that she was old and had white hair, though her face was beautiful and her complexion fresh and young. Although she saw me approaching, she made no movement to veil her face or cover her head; but went on arranging her hair with her ivory comb. I stopped before her and greeted her, saying: "O woman old in years but young of face, why do you not dye your hair and look altogether like a girl? Surely there is no reason why you should not do so?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE LIFTED HER HEAD and, looking at me with her great eyes, answered by these lines:

*I used to dye my hair
But time undyed it.
Now I am sage,
I show my bosom bare
Which does not age.
(I used to hide it.)*

SHAHRAZADE CONTINUED:

A DIFFICULTY RESOLVED

IT IS RELATED that the wazir, Giafar, received the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid at his house one night and spared no pains to entertain him pleasantly. As the feast proceeded, the khalifat said suddenly: "Now I remember, Giafar, that you have bought a very beautiful slave for yourself and that, having seen her, I want to buy her from you. I wish you to give her up to me at any price which suits you." "I have no intention of selling her, Commander of the Faithful," answered Giafar. "Give her to me, then," said Haroun; but Giafar replied: "I have no intention of doing that either, Commander of the Faithful." Al-Rachid drew his brows together, and cried: "I swear by the three oaths that I will instantly divorce my wife, the lady Zobeida, if you do not consent either to sell or give me the slave!" Then Giafar cried: "And I swear by the three oaths that I will instantly divorce my wife, the mother of my children, before I will do either!" When they had both sworn, they suddenly realised that, bemused by the mist of wine, they had gone a great deal too far and, by common consent, began to search for a way out of their difficulty. After a few moments of perplexity, Al-Rachid said: "I see no way out of such an embarrassing situation, unless we are guided by the wisdom of the kadi Abu Yusuf, who knows all that there is to be known of the law concerning divorce." At once they sent for this man, and Abu Yusuf thought to himself: "If the khalifat demands my presence in the middle of the night, some serious difficulty must have arisen in Islam." He went out

quickly and mounted his mule, saying to the slave who was to follow the animal: "Take his forage bag with you, for he has not yet finished his meal, and do not forget to fasten it to his head when we arrive."

When he entered the chamber where the khalifat and Giafar were waiting him, Haroun Al-Rachid rose in his honour and made him sit down by his side, a privilege which he never accorded to anyone but Abu Yusuf. "I have called you on a very grave and delicate affair," he said and then explained the case. "Commander of the Faithful," said Abu, "the solution is the simplest thing in the world," and, turning to Giafar, he continued: "All that you have to do is to sell the khalifat one half of the slave and give him the other half."

This solution delighted the khalifat, because of its admirable subtlety which, not only got them both out of their difficulty, but brought it about that he should have the slave. The girl was at once sent for, and the khalifat said: "I cannot wait for the legal time to pass when her freeing will be complete and I can take her. Therefore, O Abu Yusuf, you must also find us some way by which this freeing can be instantly completed." "That is easier still. Bring in some young mameluke!" said Abu Yusuf; and when a mameluke was brought, Abu continued: "For this immediate freeing to be lawful, the slave must be legally married. I will give her in marriage to this mameluke together with a sum of money, on condition that he divorces her without touching her. Then she can be your concubine at once, Commander of the Faithful." To the mameluke he said: "Do you accept this slave as your lawful wife?" The mameluke answered: "I accept her." "Then," proclaimed the kadi, "you are married! Here are a thousand dinars;

now divorce her!" But the mameluke exclaimed: "Now that I am legally married to her, I shall stay married, for the girl pleases me."

On this the khalifat drew down his brows in anger, saying to the kadi: "By the honour of my ancestors, this wisdom of yours will carry you to the gallows!" But Abu Yusuf only answered calmly: "Let not our master concern himself with the mameluke's refusal, for now things are even easier than they were before. Only grant me permission to use this mameluke as if he were my slave." "I allow it," answered Haroun, "he is your slave and your property." At once Abu Yusuf turned to the girl, saying: "I give you this mameluke as a present, as a purchased slave! Do you accept him as such?" "I accept him," she answered; and the kadi cried: "In that case his marriage with you is null and void; you are free from him! Such is the law! I have given my judgment!"

In an ecstasy of admiration, Haroun Al-Rachid leapt to his feet, crying: "O Abu Yusuf, there is not your equal in all Islam!" At once he had brought in a great dish filled with gold, and asked the kadi to accept it. Yusuf thanked him profusely; but was at a loss how to carry so much gold until he remembered the mule's food-bag. Having had the bag brought to him, he emptied all the gold into it and went his way.

This little tale is a proof that the study of jurisprudence leads to honour and riches. May the mercy of Allah be upon all concerned in it!

THEN SHAHRAZADE SAID:

ABU NOWAS AND ZOBEIDA'S BATH

IT IS RELATED that the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid loved his wife and cousin, Zobeida, so well that he made, for her sole use and in her own garden, a great fountain basin of water, hidden among leafy trees, where she might bathe, safe from the eyes of men and the sun's rays. On one day of great heat, the lady Zobeida came alone into the grove and, undressing completely by the side of the fountain, stepped into the water. She did not, however, go in above her knees, fearing the shiver of water when the body is plunged into it entire and also being unable to swim. Instead she poured water over her shoulders in little waves, out of a cup which she had brought with her, shivering at its cool and silver kisses.

The khalifat, who had seen her going towards the fountain, followed her softly, deadening the sound of his footsteps, and arrived when she was already naked. Hidden by the leaves, he set himself to admire the white rareness of her against the water; but, as he was leaning with his hand against a branch, it suddenly cracked beneath his fingers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

IN A SUDDEN FRIGHT, Zobeida turned towards the sound instinctively covering herself with her two hands, in order to hide herself from any indiscreet eye.

Now the lady Zobeida had extremely small hands, and the wing of the bee cannot cover the silver disk of the moon. Thus her endeavour to hide herself was hardly half effective and, as Fate willed it, her hands slipped, thus revealing her charms to the delighted khalifat.

Al-Rachid, who had never before had the opportunity of seeing his cousin's beauty by daylight and in the open air, was pleasantly astonished at its sumptuous size, and hastened to slip away as he had come. That which he had seen inspired him, and he tried in vain to write a poem. He achieved this line:

I saw silver in the water . . .

but, however much he tortured his soul in the attempt, he could not find a rhyme, or at all go on with the stanza. He wandered about, feeling himself very unhappy, and sweating as he repeated over and over: *I saw silver in the water. . . .* At last, feeling that the difficulty was too much for him, he called the poet Abu Nowas, saying: "Let us see if you can make a short poem beginning with this line: *I saw silver in the water. . . .*" At once, Abu Nowas, who had also been carrying out investigations near the bathing pool and had seen all that had happened, answered: "I hear and I obey!" and, to the khalifat's surprise, instantly improvised these lines:

*I saw silver in the water,
Still the picture lingers,
Of the silver-pale young daughter
When her charming fingers
Sought to shield my eyes from folly.
If I had my wish
I'd be water, I'd be jolly,
I would be a fish.*

The khalifat did not probe to find out how Abu Nowas was able to make so relevant a poem; but instead expressed his admiration with a large gift.

But do not think, O auspicious King, added Shahrazade, that this example of the poet's quick subtlety is in any way more admirable than that given by his charming improvisation in the following tale:

ABU NOWAS IMPROVISES

ONE NIGHT THE KHALIFAT, Haroun Al-Rachid, being in the grip of stark sleeplessness, was walking alone in the galleries of his palace when he saw one of his woman slaves, whom he greatly loved, hastening in the direction of the pavilion which he had reserved for her. He followed and, walking behind her into the place, took her in his arms and began to caress her and play with her until the veil which covered her fell away and the tunic slipped from her shoulders.

Desire flamed up in the khalifat's heart and he would have possessed the beautiful slave there and then, if she had not excused herself, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, I beg you to put the thing off till tomorrow, for tonight I had not expected the honour of a visit and am not well prepared. Tomorrow, if Allah wills, you will find me scented, with all my jasmins sweetening the couch." So Al-Rachid insisted no further but returned to his lonely walking.

Next day he sent Masrur, his chief eunuch, to announce his visit to the girl; but the slave, who had felt tired since dawn and less disposed than ever, answered Masrur, when he reminded her of her promise, by quoting this proverb: "Words of a night to bring the day!"

While Masrur was repeating this answer to the

khalifat, the poets Abu Nowas, Al-Rakashi, and Abu Musab, entered the presence. At once the khalifat turned to them, saying: "Let each of you immediately improvise a poem introducing the sense of this phrase: 'Words of a night to bring the day.'"

Without pause Al-Rakashi said:

*Beware, my heart, the heartless child
Who'll neither visit nor receive.
Her promises are sweet and wild;
Then, laughing in her sleeve:
"Words of a night to bring the day."
She'll say.*

Next Abu Musab came forward and said:

*The quicker my heart turns,
The better the toy for her;
The fiercer my heart burns,
The better her joy.
She breaks in the light time
The promise night gave for her
With: "Words of the night time
To bring in the day."*

Lastly Abu Nowas came forward and said:

*Beautiful, troubled, and gay,
Sweetly resisting,
When the bold drunken breeze
In the black midnight trees
Would sway, tenderly sway,
The waist and its fruit.
O over-light silk, you are misting
The white lighter fruit
Which is budded.
The other is budless.*

*Now, I am full-blooded
If others are bloodless,
I slip the bright vest
From the pearl of the crest
Of her shoulder.
The dim torches show her
With not angry brows;
I grow bolder,
For the darkness allows,
And the vest tumbles lower.
I whisper: "The rest!"
But she smiles and says: "Wait!
It will not be too late
On the morrow!"
Ah, sorrow, my sorrow!
Next morning I pray
But she turns it away
In a laughing despite
With: "Words of the night
For the day!"*

When he had heard these improvisations, Al-Rachid gave large sums of money to the first two poets; but condemned Abu Nowas to instant death, crying: "As Allah lives, there must be something between you and the girl. If not, how could you have made so exact a description of things which happened when I alone was with her?" Abu Nowas burst out laughing and answered: "Our master, the khalifat, forgets that a true poet can guess at what is hidden. The Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) painted us well enough, when he said: 'Poets follow all roads as if they were mad. Inspiration guides them; or it may be the devil. They write excellent things but do not do them.'"

Hearing this excuse, the khalifat, instead of seeking to plumb the mystery any further, pardoned Abu Nowas and gave him double the amount which he had given to the other two poets.

When King Shahryar had heard this story, he cried: "As Allah lives, I would not have pardoned Abu Nowas! I would have solved the mystery and cut off the rascal's head. Once and for all, Shahrazade, I forbid you to tell me any more of this crapulous poet who had no respect for khalifats or laws." Then said Shahrazade: "Since that is your wish, O auspicious King, I will now tell you the tale about the ass."

THE ASS

ONE DAY A JOLLY FELLOW, who belonged to that class which is always being taken in, was walking through the market leading an ass behind him by a simple cord. A clever robber saw him and, wishing to steal the beast, expressed his desire to one of his companions, who asked: "How can you do it without the man seeing you?" "Follow me and you shall see," answered the other.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE WENT UP BEHIND the man and, softly untying the halter from the ass, put it round his own neck,

without the exchange being noticed; then he walked along like a beast of burden while his companion made off with the ass.

When the thief knew that the stolen animal was out of sight, he halted abruptly so that the man in front, without turning, tried to pull him forward. Finding that he could not do this, the victim looked over his shoulder to curse the ass and saw the robber at the end of the halter regarding him with humble and imploring eyes. In his stupefaction he stood stock still in front of the unexpected changeling and it was some time before he could summon breath to ask: "What thing are you?" Filling his voice with tears, the robber cried: "I am your ass, my master; but my tale is a strange one. In my youth I was a bad lad, given to all sorts of disgraceful vice. One day I returned home in a disgusting state of drunkenness and my mother, who could not contain her anger, heaped reproaches upon me and would have turned me out of the house. I pushed her away and even struck her in my intoxicated frenzy; therefore she cursed me and, because of that curse, I was changed into an ass. You, my master, bought me in the market for five dinars and, ever since then, while I have served you as a beast of burden, you have continually pricked my bottom when I was worn out and could not walk, and have subjected me to a thousand oaths which I would not dare to repeat. I could not complain, because my voice had been taken away from me; the very most I could do, and that on the rarest occasions, was to fart instead of speaking. But today my poor mother must certainly have remembered me kindly and, in the pity of her heart, prayed mercy on me from the Highest; and this mercy has undoubtedly changed me back into my original form."

Hearing this, the poor man cried aloud: "O fellow human, forgive me the injuries which I have done you, for Allah's sake, and forget the harsh treatment which you have undergone. There is no help save in Allah!" So crying, he undid the halter from the robber's neck and returned, bitterly repenting, to his own house, where remorse prevented him from closing his eyes all night.

A few days after, the victim of this trick went to the ass market to buy another animal and was mightily surprised to see his old donkey in its original form being put up for sale. Thinking to himself: "This rascal must have committed some other heinous act!" he went up to the ass, which brayed with delight on seeing him, and, bending down to its ear, cried into it as loud as he could: "O incorrigible young man, you have been beating your mother again! As Allah lives, I will not buy you a second time!" He spat furiously in the donkey's face and then, passing on, bought himself another animal which was notorious as being descended from the father and mother of all asses.

THAT SAME NIGHT, SHAHRAZADE ALSO SAID:

ZOBEIDA CAUGHT IN THE ACT

IT IS RELATED that the Commander of the Faithful Haroun Al-Rachid went to rest one noon in the bed-chamber of his queen, Zobeida, and was stretching himself on the bed, when he noticed upon it that which is unmentionable, yet concerning the origin of which there could hardly be any mistake. He rose quickly and the world darkened before his eyes. Tottering with indignation, he sought out Zobeida and, with eyes

on fire and trembling beard, cried out to her: "What is this thing upon our bed?" The queen bent over the couch and regarded the matter, saying; "It is that it is, O Commander of the Faithful." Holding back his wrath with difficulty, the khalifat demanded: "And can you explain the presence of this undeniably recent sign upon the bed where I have not visited you for more than a week?" "Faith be upon me and about me, Prince of Believers!" cried Zobeida in great emotion. "Can you possibly suspect me of indiscretion?" "I so suspect you," said Al-Rachid, "that I am going to send for the kadi, Abu Yusuf, to give an expert opinion on this matter, and, by the honour of my ancestors, O daughter of my uncle, I shall stick at nothing if the kadi says that you are guilty!"

When the kadi arrived, Al-Rachid said to him: "O Abu Yusuf, tell me what this thing may be?" The kadi went up to the bed, looked long and carefully upon the matter, made certain tests, and then said: "Commander of the Faithful, it is man's seed."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"AND THE IMMEDIATE origin of it?" asked the khali-fat. Now here the kadi was placed in a very awkward position. Being unwilling to bring down upon himself the enmity of Zobeida, he cast up his eyes to the ceiling, as if in reflection, to gain time and, in doing so,

saw the wing of a bat extruding from a hole in which it was sleeping. With a sudden inspiration, he said: "Give me a lance, O Prince of Believers." The khali-fat handed him a lance and Abu Yusuf at once stabbed the bat so that it fell heavily to the floor. Then he said: "Commander of the Faithful, the books of medicine teach us that the bat's semen closely resembles that of a man. The mess was certainly made by this bat while he looked upon the lady Zobeida in her sleep. You see that I have punished his temerity with death."

This explanation entirely satisfied the khalifat who, being re-assured as to the innocence of his wife, gratefully loaded the kadi with gifts. Zobeida herself was delighted and therefore not only added to the khali-fat's gifts, but invited Abu Yusuf to eat some early fruit with herself and Al-Rachid. The kadi sat down upon carpets between the khalifat and his queen, and Zobeida, peeling a banana, handed it to him with these words: "I have in my garden other fruits which are very rare at this season; would you prefer them to the bananas?" "Mistress," he answered, "I make it a rule never to give judgment by default. I must see those early fruits and compare them with these early fruits before expressing a preference." Zobeida had the other rare dainties of her garden plucked and brought in; when the kadi had tasted them, she said: "Which do you prefer now?" Abu Yusuf smiled knowingly and, looking at the khalifat and Zobeida in turn, replied: "As Allah lives, the answer is not easy; if I preferred one of these fruits, I would be disparaging the other and run the risk of an indigestion!" When they heard this answer, Al-Rachid and Zobeida laughed so greatly that they fell over on their backsides.

Here, Shahrazade, seeing certain indications that King Shahryar would rather that Zobeida had been condemned without mercy, hastened to distract his attention by telling him the following tale.

MALE OR FEMALE?

AMONG OTHER TALES of the great Khusrau, King of Persia, it is told that he was very fond of fish. One day, as he was sitting on his terrace with his wife, the beautiful Shirin, a fisherman brought him a fish of great size and distinction. The king was delighted and ordered the fisherman to be given four thousand dirhams; but Shirin, who never approved of the generous prodigality of her husband, waited until the man had gone, and then said: "You must not be so spendthrift as to give four thousand dirhams for a single fish; you must get the money back for, otherwise, in the future, anyone who brings you anything will start his hope of reward at four thousand dirhams and you will never be able to keep pace with their pretensions." "It would be a deep shame for a king to take what he had given," answered Khusrau. "Let us forget the matter." But Shirin exclaimed: "It is impossible to leave the thing as it is; besides, there is a way of getting back the money from the fisherman without incurring any criticism at all. All you have to do is to call the man back and ask him whether the fish he brought is male or female. Then, if he says it is a male, give it back and say that you wanted a female; and if he says it is a female, give it back and say that you wanted a male."

The king, who loved his wife with consuming passion and did not wish to displease her, regretfully had the man recalled. But the fisherman had been

gifted with ready wit and, when Khusrau said to him: "Is the fish male or female?" he kissed the earth, and answered: "The fish, O king, is an hermaphrodite."

Khusrau was overjoyed at these words and, in the midst of his laughter, ordered the intendant to give the fisherman eight thousand dirhams instead of four thousand. When the money had been counted out and put in the fish bag, the man joyfully went on his way.

While he was crossing the courtyard of the palace he accidentally let fall one silver dirham from the bag. At once he set his burden down and searched diligently until he found the coin, which he replaced with many expressions of satisfaction.

Khusrau and Shirin were watching from the terrace and saw all that passed; the queen, not wishing to let slip so good an opportunity, exclaimed:

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"WHAT A SHAMEFUL FELLOW! He drops a dirham and, instead of leaving it to be picked up by one poorer than himself, is vile enough to recover it and cheat the necessitous." Khusrau was impressed by this remark, so he recalled the fisherman, and said to him: "O object being, your soul is so small that you cannot even be called a man! Avarice is your ruin. You set down a bag filled with money to pick up a single dirham which has fallen to be a good fortune

to the poor." The fisherman kissed the earth, and answered: "May Allah prolong the life of my king! If I picked up the dirham, it was not because it was worth much money to me, but because it had a great and other value in my eyes. Does it not bear, on one of its sides, the image of the king and, on the other, the name of the king? I did not wish to leave it lying where it might be shamed by the feet of some passer-by. Also in hastening to pick it up, I was following the example of my king who picked up out of the dust a poor fisherman not worth a dirham in his eyes."

This answer so pleased King Khusrau that he gave the man another four thousand dirhams and ordered heralds to proclaim publicly all through his empire: "Never let yourselves be guided by the advice of women. If you listen to them, you will commit two faults in avoiding a half fault!"

King Shahryar, on hearing this tale, exclaimed: "I highly approve of Khusrau's conduct and also his mistrust of women. They are the cause of many calamities." But already Shahrazade was beginning to relate with a smile:

THE SHARE

ONE NIGHT THE KHALIFAT, Haroun Al-Rachid, was complaining of his insomnia to his wazir Giafar and Masrur his sword-bearer, when suddenly Masrur burst out laughing. The khalifat looked at him with frowning brows, and said: "What are you laughing at? Are you mad or are you merely impertinent?" "As Allah lives, Commander of the Faithful," answered Masrur, "I swear, by your blood kinship with the Prophet, that I laughed from neither of these

causes, but just because I remembered the jests of a certain Ibn Al-Karibi, about whom listeners were making quite a circle yesterday on the banks of the Tigris." Then said the khalifat: "If that is the case, go quickly and fetch this Ibn Al-Karibi; perhaps he will succeed in distracting me from my sleeplessness."

At once Masrur ran off in search of the humorous Ibn Al-Karibi, and, having met him, said: "I have spoken of you to the khalifat; he wishes you to come and make him laugh." "I hear and I obey!" said the man; and Masrur continued: "I am very willing to conduct you to the khalifat; but it must be on condition that you give me three-quarters of any reward he makes you." "That is too much," answered Ibn Al-Karibi, "I will give you two-thirds as commission."

After making a few more difficulties for form's sake, Masrur accepted the bargain, and conducted the man into the presence of the khalifat.

On seeing him enter, Al-Rachid said: "They tell me that you say very amusing things. Let us have a sample of your quality; but I must warn you that, if you do not make me laugh, the stick awaits you."

This threat effectually froze all Ibn Al-Karibi's wit and he could think of nothing but disastrous commonplaces; so that Al-Rachid, instead of laughing, grew more and more irritable and at last cried out: "Give him a hundred blows on the soles of his feet to bring down the blood which is obstructing his brain!" At once the man was stretched out on the ground and the soles of his feet soundly beaten; but suddenly, when the number of strokes had passed thirty, the victim cried out: "The rest are for Masrur; because we agreed that he should have two-thirds

of all I got!" Hearing this, the Khalifat made a sign and the guards stretched Masrur out in the other's place and began to make his feet feel the rhythm of the stick. After the first few blows, however, the eunuch cried out: "As Allah lives, it was unjust of me to ask more than a quarter; I forfeit the rest of my share."

Straightway the khalifat so laughed that he fell over on his backside and, after, gave each of the sufferers a thousand dinars.

Being unwilling to let the night pass without beginning the following tale, Shahrazade went on without pause:

THE SCHOOLMASTER

A VAGABOND, WHOSE TRADE was living upon other people, once had the idea, although he could not read or write, of becoming a schoolmaster; as that was the only profession in which he could make money by doing nothing. For it is notorious that anyone can be a schoolmaster, although he be completely ignorant of the rules and elementary principles of language. It is only necessary to be cunning enough to make others believe that one is a great grammarian; and that is not difficult, as really great grammarians are usually poor men with narrow, mean, and disparaging intellects, impotent and incomplete.

Our vagabond turned himself into a schoolmaster by the simple process of increasing the folds and size of his turban and opening a little room at the bottom of a street, which he decorated with pictures of writing and the like baits.

He had not long to wait for clients, because, at

the sight of his imposing turban, all the people of the quarter felt convinced of his great learning and hastened to send their children to him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS HE COULD NOT read or write, he invented the following ingenious way of conducting his school: he made the children who knew a little teach those who knew nothing, while he pretended to overlook the lesson and approve or disapprove. In this way the school flourished and the master began to put by money. One day, as he sat with his stick in his hand, frowning with terrible eyes upon the unfortunate little children who fearfully regarded him, a woman came in, holding a letter in her hand, and begged the master to read it to her, as is the custom of women who cannot read. The schoolmaster did not know how to avoid this direct proof, so he rose and made as if to go out hastily; but the woman held him back, begging him to read the letter before he went. "I cannot stay just now," he answered. "The muezzin has announced midday prayer and I must go to the mosque." "Allah be with you!" cried the importunate woman. "This letter is from my husband who has been away for five years and you alone in all the quarter can read it to me." With that she thrust the letter into his hand.

The schoolmaster was thus forced to take it, but all he could do then, in his embarrassment, was to

hold it upside down and, as he looked at the writing, beat his brow, thrust aside his turban, and sweat at every pore.

Seeing this, the poor woman thought: "There can be no doubt of it; if it agitates the schoolmaster so much, it must contain bad news. Alas the day! Perhaps my husband is dead!" Anxiously she asked the master: "Is he dead? For pity's sake, hide nothing from me!" When the man shook his head vaguely and kept silence, she cried again: "O woe upon my head, must I tear my garments?" He answered: "Tear!" "Must I beat and claw my cheeks?" she sobbed; and he answered: "Beat and claw!"

Maddened with grief, the unfortunate woman ran from the school and filled her own house with cries of desolation. While all her neighbours, who had run in, were vainly trying to console her, one of her relations entered, and having taken up and read the letter, said to the woman: "Who told you your husband is dead? There is nothing about it in the letter. This is all it says: *Greeting and salutation, O daughter of my uncle! I am in excellent health and hope to be with you in a fortnight. In the meanwhile I send you a linen sheet wrapped up in a cover. Allah be with you!*"

On this the woman took the letter and returned to the school, meaning to reproach the master for having led her so far astray. She found him sitting at his door, and said to him: "Are you not ashamed of so deceiving a poor woman and telling her that her husband is dead, when all that he has written is that he will be home soon, and sends me a sheet and a cover?" "My poor woman," answered the schoolmaster, "you are quite right to reproach me, but I hope you will forgive me if I tell you that I was deeply occupied with

other matters when I had your letter in my hand. Reading it quickly and the wrong way up, I thought it said that they were sending the remains of your husband back to you covered in a linen sheet."

THEN SHAHRAZADE SAID:

INSCRIPTION ON A CHEMISE

IT IS RELATED that Al-Amin, brother of the khalifat Al-Maamun, on going one day to visit his uncle Al-Mahdi, saw a very beautiful young slave playing the lute and fell in love with her. Al-Mahdi noticed the impression which the child had made upon his nephew and, wishing to give him an agreeable present, waited until he had gone and then sent the slave after him, loaded with jewels and very richly dressed. But Al-Amin knowing that his uncle had a great reputation as a lover of still unripe fruit, imagined that he had had first use of the slave; therefore he did not wish to accept her and sent her back with a letter, saying that apples which the gardener had bitten before they were ripe were not popular in the market.

Al-Mahdi at once undressed the girl, placed a lute in her hand, and sent her back again to Al-Amin, dressed only in a silk chemise, over which ran this inscription in letters of gold:

No hand has been allowed to touch

The rose I hide,

Though eyes have looked upon it and desired it.

Surely the thought of all this foiled desire

Should feed your fire

And fan your pride

And raise the value of the bud, as such,

If it required it!

On seeing the girl's charms displayed by this delightful garment and on reading the inscription, Al-Amin accepted the gift as one of the most pleasant he had ever had.

ON THAT SAME NIGHT, SHAHRAZADE SAID:

INSCRIPTION ON A CUP

ONE DAY THE KHALIFAT, Al-Mutawakkil fell ill and his doctor, Yohanna, prescribed excellent remedies which dissipated the sickness, so that convalescence came. Then from all sides there poured in gifts of congratulations upon the khalifat. Al-Fath bin Kahkan sent him an untouched girl, whose breasts were the form and example for the breasts of all the women of that time. Beyond her own beauty, she carried and brought to him a fair crystal jar filled with choice wine, from which she poured a draught into a gold cup, having this inscription picked out in rubies upon it:

*Some wise electuary or balm,
Some learned knife,
May cure particular complaints;
But when the whole soul faints
Here is the old, the calm,
The purple remedy for life.*

Yohanna, who was present, read the inscription laughing and said to the khalifat: "As Allah lives, O commander of the Faithful, this girl and her medicine will bring back your strength better than all the cures of ancient or modern art."

Then without pause, Shahrazade began the following tale:

THE KHALIFAT IN THE BASKET

THIS STORY WAS TOLD by the famous singer, Ishak of Mosul, who said:

One night, when I had left after feasting late with the khalifat Al-Maamun, I was suffering so greatly from a long continence of urine, that I made my way down the first unlighted side street and, going near the wall—but not too near, as I did not wish to receive a jet of my own water in my face—squatted down politely and pissed my fill. It was a great relief. I had hardly finished and was shaking myself, when I felt something fall on my head in the darkness. Springing up in a fright, I took hold of the thing and discovered, by feeling it, that it was a large basket, fastened at the corner with four cords which led up to the house under which I stood. Carrying my investigations further, I found that it was lined with silk and contained two delightfully scented cushions.

Now I had drunk a little more than usual and my uplifted fancy suggested that I should sit down in the basket and rest. No sooner had I given rein to this inclination that I felt myself rapidly pulled up to the terrace above, where I was met by four young silent girls, who led me into the house and invited me to follow them. One of them walked in front of me torch in hand, and the three others came behind, while I passed down a marble stair and entered a hall, so magnificent that it could only be compared with that in the khalifat's palace. "They must mistake me for someone else," I said to myself, "Allah will unwind the adventure as He thinks fit!"

A vast silk curtain, which hid one part of the hall, now rose and I saw ten ravishing women walking towards me, tripping and swaying exquisitely, carry-

ing torches and gold censers, in which the best of nard and aloes burned sweetly. Among them was a girl, most like the moon, who could have tortured all the stars with jealousy. As she walked she balanced on her little feet and looked tenderly sideways, so that the grossest and heaviest soul would have flown upwards at the sight. I leapt to my feet and bowed towards her, while she looked at me smiling and said: "Welcome, O stranger!" Then she sat down and continued in a delightful voice: "Rest yourself, my lord." I sank on to a cushion, quite sobered from the wine but already drunken with a fiercer drink. "How was it, my lord, that you came into our street and sat in the basket?" said the girl; and I answered: "O mistress, it was the anguish of my urine which led me into the street, the wine which led me into the basket, your generosity which led me into this hall, your charms which led away the wine and led me into stronger intoxication." The girl was visibly pleased with my reply and asked me what my trade might be. Feeling that I could hardly tell her that I was the khalifat's singer and musician, I answered: "I am a weaver from the weavers' market in Baghdad." "Your manners are exquisite and you are a credit to the weavers' market!" she exclaimed. "If you added a knowledge of poetry, we should never regret having received you among us. Do you know anything of verse?" "A little," I said; but when she begged me to repeat some stanzas, I answered: "O my mistress, a guest is always a little put out of countenance at first by his reception; I beg you to encourage me by saying some of your favourite poems first." "Willingly," she answered, and straightway began to recite well-chosen passages from the older poets, such as Amr, Al-Kays, Zuhayr, Antar, Nabi-

ghat, Amr bin Kultum, and Tarafah; and from the moderns, such as Abu Nowas, Al-Rakashi, and Abu Musab. I was marvelling at the purity of her diction when she said to me: "I hope that your shyness has now passed." "As Allah lives, it has," I answered; and, in my turn, chose out all the most delicate verses I knew, and recited them with considerable feeling. When I had finished, she said to me: "By Allah, I did not know that there were such cultivated people in the weavers' market!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

A FEAST WAS SERVED in which there was no dearth of fruit or flowers, and the girl served me herself with the choicest morsels. Then, when the cloth was lifted, wine and cups were brought and she filled for me, saying: "Now is the best part of our meeting; do you know any beautiful tales?" I bowed and started at once to tell her many amusing details about the life of kings and courts; but suddenly she stopped me, saying: "Truly, I am more than ordinarily surprised that a weaver should know so much about the inner life of khalifats." "There is nothing astonishing in that," I replied, "I have a delightful friend who is much about the palace and, in his leisure, he often charms me with reminiscences." "In that case," she said, "I can only admire the excellence of your memory."

All this time, as I inhaled the perfumes of nard and aloes and looked upon this beauty, understanding the language of her lips and eyes, I felt that I had never been so happy, and said to myself: "What would the khalifat do if he could see me? Surely he would sprout wings and fly here instantly!"

Soon the girl said to me: "You are a most distinguished man; your wit has been polished with pleasant knowledge and your manners are of great refinement. I have only one further thing to ask of you: will you accompany yourself upon the lute and sing us something?" Being a professional musician, I did not care to sing, so I answered: "Once I tried to learn singing, but nothing came of it; so I gave it up. I would perform with the greatest pleasure if I could; but, as it is, my ignorance must be my excuse. On the other hand, everything about you leads me to suppose that you have a voice of perfect beauty. If you would sing us something, the happiness of our night would be crowned with happiness."

She had a lute brought and sang to me; never in all my life have I heard a fuller, clearer, or better controlled voice than hers, or a greater knowledge of the truly subtle effects in music. Seeing my astonishment, she said: "Do you know who wrote the words or the music?" Although I could hardly plead ignorance, I answered: "I do not know at all." Then she cried: "Is it possible that anyone in the world should not know that song? The words are by Abu Nowas and the music, which is really great, is by the famous Ishak of Mosul." Without moving a muscle, I exclaimed: "As Allah lives, Ishak is nothing compared to you." "Bak, bak," she cried, "you must not say such things! Ishak has not his equal in the world; one can see that you have not heard of him."

Then she went on singing, interrupting herself from time to time to see that I lacked for nothing; and we continued in this pleasant way until the dawn.

With the first light, an old woman who must have been her nurse came to warn her that the time for departure had come. Before leaving me, the girl said: "Is it necessary to recommend discretion? Intimate parties are like a pledge which one leaves at the door before retiring." "Such a recommendation is not necessary," I answered bowing; and then, taking leave of her, allowed myself to be placed in the basket and lowered into the street.

I returned home and, after making my morning prayer, retired to bed and slept until the evening. When I woke, I dressed hastily and went to the palace, where the chamberlains told me that the khalifat had gone out, and bade me wait his return, as he had need of me that night to sing at one of his feasts.

I waited for a long time and then, as the khalifat did not return, told myself that I was a fool to miss another evening of so joyous a sort. I ran to the street and found the basket hanging as before; getting inside, I was again hauled up and soon found myself in the presence of the girl.

When she saw me she laughed, saying: "As Allah lives, I believe that you mean to take up your permanent abode among us!" I bowed and answered: "Surely a very natural wish; only you know, my mistress, that the rights of hospitality last for three days and this is but the second. If I came back after the third, you have a right to shed my blood!"

We passed the night in joyous fashion, chatting, telling tales, saying verses, and singing, as before. As I was about to be let down in the basket, I thought of the anger of the khalifat and said to myself: "He

will not accept any excuse unless I tell him of this adventure, and he will never believe the adventure, unless he tests my story with his own presence." Therefore I turned to the girl, saying: "O mistress, it is evident that you love singing and good voices. Now I have a cousin who is much better looking than I am, better mannered, cleverer, and knowing every song which Ishak of Mosul ever wrote. Will you allow me to bring him with me tomorrow, on the third and last day of your charming hospitality?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"SEE, YOU ARE ALREADY becoming indiscreet!" she answered. "But, as your cousin is such a pleasant fellow, you may bring him." Delighted with this permission, I thanked her and went my way.

When I got home I found the khalifat's guards waiting for me, who treated me with plentiful bad words, arrested me, and dragged me into the presence of Al-Maamun. I saw him seated upon his throne with terrible flaming eyes, as in the worst days of his anger. As soon as he saw me, he cried out: "Son of a dog, have you dared to disobey me?" "No, no, Commander of the Faithful," I answered, "I had a very good reason." "What is that?" he asked; and I answered: "It is a secret for your ears alone." At once he ordered every one to retire and bade me speak.

Then I told him my adventure in all its details, and added: "Tonight, the girl expects us both; I have promised her."

Al-Maamun was all smiles at once, and said: "You are right; it was a very good reason. I am glad you were inspired to think of me." He could hardly wait till nightfall; but I filled in the time by continually recommending him not to betray himself and me, by calling me 'Ishak' in front of the girl. He gave me a formal promise and, when the suitable time had come, disguised himself as a merchant and accompanied me to the little street.

We found two baskets instead of one, and took our places in them. Without delay we were pulled up and led down from the terrace into the magnificent hall which I have already described, where we were soon joined by the girl.

She was more beautiful that night than she had ever been, and I saw that the khalifat fell violently in love with her. When she sang he became almost delirious, for the notes of her voice acted like wine upon the wine which she had already given us. With gay enthusiasm, Al-Maamun cried out: "Come, come, Ishak, why do you not sing some new song of yours in answer to this charming one?" I was obliged to answer: "I hear and I obey, Commander of the Faithful."

The girl looked at us for a moment and then ran from the room to cover her face, as a woman must do in the presence of the khalifat. Grieved that she had left us owing to his carelessness, Al-Maamun told me to find out at once who was the master of the house. I called the old nurse and, under fear of the khalifat, she answered: "O calamity, O shame upon

our heads! My lady is the daughter of the khalifat's wazir, Hasan bin Sahl!" "The wazir to me instantly!" cried Al-Maamun; and, in a few moments, the trembling old woman introduced a most astonished wazir into the presence of the khalifat.

Seeing his blank expression, Al-Maamun burst out laughing, and said: "Have you a daughter?" "I have, Commander of the Faithful," answered the old man. "What is her name?" asked the khalifat. "Khadijah," was the reply; then said the khalifat: "Is she married or a virgin?" "A virgin, Commander of the Faithful," returned bin Sahl. On hearing this, Al Maamun exclaimed: "I wish you to give her to me as lawful wife." "My daughter and I are the slaves of the Prince of Believers!" cried the wazir; and the khalifat continued: "I will give her a hundred thousand dinars as dowry; you can come for the money tomorrow morning to the palace. In the meanwhile, conduct your daughter to her future home with all the magnificence which such a marriage demands. You may divide among the folk of the bride's train a thousand villages and a thousand farms as a gift from me."

With that the khalifat rose and I followed him; as we were going out by the main door, this time, he said to me: "Be very careful not to speak of this adventure to anyone, Ishak. Your head answers for your discretion."

I kept the secret until the death of the khalifat and of the lady Khadijah, who was without doubt the most beautiful woman I ever saw. But Allah knows more!

When Shahrazade had made an end of this tale, little Doniazade cried from her carpet: "O sister, how sweet, savoury, and tender are your words!"

"You may well say so, when you have heard the Tale of the Tripe Cleaner," answered Shahrazade smiling; and at once continued:

THE TRIPE CLEANER

ONE DAY AT MECCA, during the annual pilgrimage, just when the crowd of pilgrims were making their seven circles round the sacred Kaaba, a man came out from among them and, going up to the wall of the Kaaba, took hold of the sacred veil which covers it, with both his hands. Then he put himself into the attitude of prayer and cried with an accent of heartfelt sincerity: "O Allah, make the woman angry with her husband again, so that I can lie with her!"

When the pilgrims heard this strange prayer said in such a holy place, they were so scandalised that they threw themselves upon the man and, casting him to the ground, rained blows upon him. Then they dragged him before the emir of the pilgrims, whose authority is absolute over all of them, saying: "O emir, we heard this man offering up impious words while he held the veil of the Kaaba!" Then they repeated the words, and the emir of the pilgrims said: "Let him hang!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT THE MAN threw himself at the emir's feet, crying: "I conjure you by the virtues of the Messenger

of Allah (upon whom be prayer and peace!) to hear my story before you judge me!" The emir nodded assent and he who was condemned to be hanged continued:

O emir, I have two trades, to collect the unpleasantness of the street and to clean sheep's tripes for sale and livelihood. One day I was walking quietly behind my donkey, which was loaded with full tripes which I had fetched from the slaughter-house, when I met a large quantity of frightened persons, fleeing in all directions or hiding in doorways. Looking behind them, I saw a troop of slaves armed with long sticks driving these foot passengers before them. I asked what was the matter and was told that the harem of some great man was about to use that street and it was therefore being cleared of people. Knowing that I might be exposed to great danger if I continued on my way, I halted my ass and dragged him with me into the corner of a wall, where I hid as well as I could, turning my face so that I should not be tempted to look at the great man's women. Soon I heard the harem passing and was beginning to think of continuing my journey, when I felt myself rudely seized in the two arms of a negro and saw my ass being carried off by another. In my fright I turned my head and perceived thirty girls all looking at me; in the midst of them was a young woman with the languishing glances of a gazelle which thirst has tamed, and a waist as slim and supple as a banana palm. With my hands tied behind my back, I was dragged along by other black eunuchs, in spite of my protestations and the protests of passers-by, who had seen me with my face to the wall and said to my persecutors: "He has done nothing! This poor man is an honest collector of un-

pleasantness and cleaner of tripes. It is unlawful in the sight of Allah to arrest and bind an innocent man!" But my captors, without taking any notice, went on dragging me behind the harem.

All this time I was thinking to myself: "What crime have I committed? Perhaps the nasty smell of the tripes offended the lady's nose; she may be pregnant and have felt something go wrong inside because of them. That must be the reason; or perhaps it is my own disgusting appearance and the holes in my rags which show the less respectable parts of me. There is no help save in Allah!"

I was dragged along, amid the pitying cries of the people, until we all came to the door of a great house where I was forced into a forecourt, the magnificence of which I cannot describe to you. "This is the place of my punishment," I thought, "I shall be put to death and none of my family will ever know the reason of my disappearance." In my last moments, I began to think of my poor ass, which had always been so ready and careful, which had never upset the tripes or the baskets of unpleasantness. I was startled out of these afflicting reflections by the arrival of a pretty little boy slave, who gently begged me to follow him. He led me to an hammam where I was received by three fair women slaves, who said: "Swiftly take off your rags." When I had done as I was told, they took me into the hot room and bathed me with their own hands, one taking charge of my head, one of my limbs, and one of my belly. They rubbed me, perfumed me, and then dried me. Lastly, they brought magnificent robes and begged me to put them on. At this point, I was greatly perplexed, for I did not know which end to take them by and had not the slightest idea how to arrange them, having never

seen such things in all my life. "As Allah lives, my mistresses," I said, "I shall have to remain naked, for I can never dress in these extraordinary clothes by myself!" Then the slaves came up to me laughing and helped me to dress, tickling, pinching and plaguing me the while and playing divers and sundry tricks with me, on account of my ignorance about such gear as they had made ready for me.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY HAD finished dressing me and had sprinkled me with rose-water, they took me by the arm as if I had been a bridegroom and led me into a hall, which was furnished so elegantly that I may not describe it and ornamented with paintings of coloured lines pleasantly interlaced. There I saw the woman of whom I have spoken, lying at ease on a bed of bamboo and ivory, dressed in a light robe of Mosul silk, with a few slaves about her. She signed to me to approach and when I had done so, made me sit down; then she ordered the slaves to bring food and we were served with astonishing meats whose names I do not know and the like of which I had never seen before. I ate a few platefuls to satisfy my hunger and then, after washing my hands, set to upon the fruit. Next, jars of various wines were brought and little censers of perfume; after we had been well smoked with incense and benzoin, the woman poured

wine for me with her own hands and we drank out of the same cup until we were both drunk. Finally she signed to her slaves, who left us alone, and, pulling me towards her, threw her arms about me. I served her with jam so that she was delighted; sometimes giving her stiff slices of the fruit and again feeding her with the jelly. Each time that I pressed her against me, I grew drunk with the musk and amber of her body and thought that I was either dreaming or dead in the arms of a paradisal houri. We stayed embraced until the morning and then, when she told me that it was time to go, she informed herself of my address, saying that she would send for me should occasion serve. At parting she gave me a handkerchief embroidered with gold and silver into which something was notted at the corner. "Buy food for your ass," she said; and dismissed me as if I had been a bad angel and she Paradise.

When I got to the tripe-shop in which I lodged, I began to unknot the handkerchief, saying to myself: "This feels like five coppers; that would be enough to buy something for dinner." Picture my surprise when I found fifty miskals of gold. Digging a hole, I hid them away against hard times and then, buying myself some bread and an onion, ate at the door of the shop, dreaming of my adventure.

At nightfall a little slave came from her I loved and led me back to the same hall, where she was waiting for me. I would have kissed the earth between her hands, but she raised me up and, stretching herself with me on the ivory and bamboo bed, gave me as blessed a night as the one before. In the morning, when dismissing me, she gave me another handkerchief containing a further fifty miskals. For eight whole days and nights this adventure was repeated;

each time a feast of dry conserve and wet conserve, and fifty gold pieces for me.

One evening, when I had gone there and was already on the bed in act to unload my merchandise, a slave entered suddenly and, whispering some words in her mistress's ear, led me swiftly out of the hall and locked me into a room on the floor above. From that place I heard a great noise of horses in the street and saw, through a window which looked on to the courtyard, a young man, as handsome as the full moon, enter the house with a numerous train of guards and slaves. He went into the room where my lady was and stayed the night in there. Although I could see nothing from my hiding place, I could hear much, O emir of the pilgrims. Ya, Allah, I could hear! What a din, what a noise, what astonishing sounds assaulted my ears. At first I thought that perhaps the young man was murdering the woman. But such was not the case. "As Allah lives," I thought, "they must have built a blacksmith's forge down there!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-eighty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE NOISE CEASED with morning and I saw the owner of the sounding hammer go out by the great door. Hardly had he disappeared when the woman came to me, saying: "You saw the young man who has just gone out? He is my husband. I will tell you what has passed between us in order that you may

know why I chose you for my lover. One day, I was sitting beside him in the garden when he left me and walked away in the direction of the kitchen. At first I thought that he had gone to satisfy some pressing need; but, when he had been absent for an hour, I went and looked for him where I thought he would be and could not find him. At last I made my way towards the kitchen, to ask news from the servants, and, on entering, saw him lying on a mat with the dish cleaner, the filthiest slave of them all. I retired hastily, swearing to myself that I would no more receive him in my bed until I had revenged myself by taking a lover from among the lowest and ugliest of the people. Daily I walked about the streets looking for such a man; but it was only on the fifth day that I met you and gave you the palm on account of your unusual dirtiness and filthy smell. Now I have accomplished my oath and am reconciled with my husband; therefore you can retire with the assurance that, if my husband again lies with any of the slaves, I will send for you at once. She gave me a further four hundred miskals and dismissed me. I came to this place to implore Allah to drive the husband into that slave's arms, so that the wife may call me back to her. Such is my story, O emir of the pilgrims.

After hearing him, the emir of the pilgrims said "We must pardon this man for his thoughtless words in presence of the Kaaba; for his circumstances seem to justify them."

THEN SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE GIRL COOL-OF-THE-EYES

Amru bin Masadah tells the following tale:

ONE DAY ABU ISA, son of Haroun Al-Rachid, saw at the house of his cousin Ali bin Hisham, a young slave called Cool-of-the-Eyes, and ardently loved her. Abu Isa took great care to hide the secret of his love and, at the same time, tried hard by indirect hints to persuade Ali to sell him the slave. Seeing at last that his efforts were useless, he decided to change his tactics; therefore he sought his brother, the khalifat Al-Maamun, son of Haroun Al-Rachid, and begged his company for a surprise visit to Ali. The khalifat consented, and the two men rode to Ali's palace.

When Ali saw them, he kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands and, having his feast hall opened, led his two visitors into it. They found it to be a fair place, built with walls and pillars of contrasting marbles, having incrustations in the Greek style, which is very pleasant to the eye, and the floor covered with Indian matting surmounted by a single piece of Bassora carpet, which occupied the whole area of the hall. After casting a quick glance of appreciation over floor, walls, and ceiling, Al-Maamun said: "Well, Ali, why do you not give us something to eat?" At once Ali clapped his hands and a multitude of slaves entered, bearing a thousand kinds of chicken, pigeons, and roast birds, hot and cold. There was every sort of liquid and solid meat, but especially game stuffed with almonds and raisins; for Al-Maamun was enormously fond of game, especially stuffed with almonds and raisins. When the eating was finished, an astonishing wine, pressed from

grapes chosen globe by globe, matured with perfumed fruits and scented edible nuts, was served in cups of gold, silver and crystal by young beautiful boys. These were dressed in floating Alexandrian draperies with silver borders; and sprinkled the guests with musked rose water from diamond sprays, while they plied them with the wine.

The khalifat was so delighted with all this that he kissed his host, saying: "As Allah lives, O Ali, you shall not henceforth be called Ali, but Father-of-Beauty!" Then Ali bin Hisham, who ever since then was known as Father-of-Beauty, made a sign to his chamberlain. At once a curtain was lifted at the end of the hall and there appeared ten young singers dressed in black silk, as beautiful as a bed of flowers. They came forward and sat on gold chairs, which ten black slaves had circled round the hall. Preluding with absolute mastery upon their stringed instruments, they sang in chorus an ode of love. Al-Maamun, fixing his eyes upon that one whose beauty had moved him most, asked her her name. "I am called Harmony, O Commander of the Faithful," she answered; and he continued: "You are worthy of your name, O Harmony. I wish to hear you sing alone." Then Harmony tuned her lute and sang:

*My tenderness
Has fears
Of eyes,
My slenderness
Distrusts
Its enemies,
But when love nears
I melt
Into his lusts.*

*He goes
And I have felt,
Ah, over well,
What the gazelle
Among
Its slaughtered young
Untimely knows.*

Al-Maamun called out delightedly: "You have indeed excelled, O girl! Who made that song?" "It was written by Amru Al-Zubaydi, and the music is by Mabid," answered the singer; and the khalifat emptied the cup which he held, while Abu Isa and Ali did the same. As they were putting down their empty cups, ten new singers dressed in blue silk and scarfed with Yaman gold brocade, took the places of the others and skilfully rendered a combined prelude. The khalifat fixed his eyes on one of them who was like rock crystal, and asked her name. "I am called Wild-Roe, O Commander of the Faithful," she replied. Then he said: "Sing us something, Wild-Roe."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninetieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SHE WHO WAS called Wild-Roe, tuned her lute and sang:

*Free girls of cheer
Who smile
At all affront,*

*Wild Mecca deer
Which man
Is not allowed to hunt,
The evil-minded can
Of wanton guile
Accuse us
Because our eyes
Are weary full,
But beautiful
Replies
Excuse us,
Though the lewd gests
Below our vests
Make righteous men abuse us.*

Al-Maamun, finding this song delicious, asked the girl whom it was by. "The words are by Jaria," she answered, "and the music by Surayj." Then the khalifat and the two others emptied their cups, while the singers retired and were replaced by ten others, clothed in scarlet silk and girt with scarlet scarves; so that, with heavy hair falling down their backs, they had the appearance of red rocks overflowed by waves at night. They sat on the gold chairs and sang in chorus, each to her lute. When they had finished, Al-Maamun turned to the fairest of them, asking her name. "I am called Seduction, O Commander of the Faithful," she said. "Let us hear your voice by itself, O Seduction!" said the khalifat; and Seduction sang:

*A girl is not afraid
Of jewels red
Or white,
Or silk brocade;*

*Each night,
Each morning on her bed
These dyes
Do stand confessed,
Her lips, her eyes,
Her rest.*

“Who wrote that poem, O Seduction?” asked the enraptured khalifat; and she replied: “Adi bin Zayd wrote it to a very old air.” Al-Maamun and the two others emptied their cups and ten new singers, dressed in gold and cinctured with gold, took their places and sang. The khalifat asked the name of the slimmest, and she answered: “I am called Sparkle-of-Dew.” “Sing to us, Sparkle-of-Dew,” he said; and at once she sang:

*I sipped the rose-wine of his cheek
And, having drunken hard
Of so much sweet,
Dressed only in a perfumed shift
Of aromatic nard,
Ran out, oh, mad, to lift
Our love song in the street,
Dressed only in a perfumed shift
Of aromatic nard.*

“As Allah lives, you have excelled, O Sparkle-of-Dew!” cried the khalifat. “Repeat the last phrase of your song again.” So she sang, with even more feeling:

*Ran out, oh, mad, to lift
Our love song in the street,*

*Dressed only in a perfumed shift
Of aromatic nard.*

Then said the khalifat: "Who wrote that song, O Sparkle-of-Dew?" "Abu Nowas wrote it, Commander of the Faithful," she answered, "and the music is by Ishak of Mosul."

When these ten slaves had finished their entertainment, the khalifat wished to be gone, but Ali said to him: "O Commander of the Faithful, I have still one more slave; she cost ten thousand dinars, and I would show her to the khalifat if he should deign to stay a few minutes longer. If she pleases him, he will be able to keep her for his own, if she does not please him, I will alter my thoughts of her." "Show me the girl," said Al-Maamun; and there appeared a young woman slave of more than mortal beauty, swaying and slim as the branch of a palm, with eyes of Babylonian enchantment, brows of a true curve, and a colour borrowed from the jasmin. She had a gold circlet round her forehead, on which these words were picked out in diamonds:

*Who but a Jinn-taught girl would know
To shoot a shaft from a cordless bow?*

The child came forward slowly and sat down smiling on one of the gold chairs; but no sooner had Abu Isa seen her than he let fall his cup and so violently changed colour that Al-Maamun noticed, and asked: "What is the matter, my brother?" "O Commander of the Faithful," answered Abu Isa, "It was but a twinge of the liver pain which I get sometimes." Then said the khalifat: "Do you by any chance know this girl? Have you seen her before?" "O Com-

mander of the Faithful," answered Abu, "who does not know the moon?" "What is your name?" asked Al-Maamun of the girl; and she answered: "Cool-of-the-Eyes, O Commander of the Faithful." "Sing us something, Cool-of-the-Eyes," he said; and she sang:

*O my own,
O my lad so young;
With red love on his tongue
And a heart of stone!
They say to be near
Cures love,
But I fear
That this will prove
As useless as the other they essay,
To be away.*

Marvelling at her voice, the khalifat asked her who had written the song. No sooner had she answered that the words were by Al-Khuzai and the air by Zurzur, than Abu Isa, in a trembling voice, said to his brother: "Allow me to answer that song, Commander of the Faithful." The khalifat gave leave, and Abu Isa sang:

*Beneath these robes of mine
Hardly a body but rather a weight of love!
If I'll not let it rise
Into my eyes
It is because I would not shame the shine
Of slim and silver moons above.*

When Ali, Father-of-Beauty, heard this answer, he understood that Abu Isa was lost in love to the

slave, Cool-of-the-Eyes; therefore he rose and, bowing before Abu Isa, said: "Dear guest, a wish shall never be framed, even in thought within my house, without being satisfied at once. If the khalifat will allow me to make an offer in his presence, Cool-of-the-Eyes is yours." The khalifat gave his sanction and Abu Isa led away the girl.

Such was the extraordinary generosity of Ali and the men of his time! May Allah have them all in His keeping!

Finally Shahrazade told this tale:

GIRLS OR BOYS?

THE SAGE OMAR AL-HUMSI RELATES:

There came to Hama, in the five hundred and sixty-third year of the Flight, the most eloquent and learned woman in all Baghdad; she whom the wise men of Irak called the Mistress of the Masters; and there flocked to the same place the most diversely erudite men of that time for the pleasure of hearing her and asking her questions. For I must tell you that this most marvellous of all women used to journey from country to country with her young brother for the purpose of holding public argument on the most difficult subjects and of asking and answering questions of science, law, theology, and literature.

Wishing to hear her, I asked my learned old friend, Al-Salhani, to come with me to the place of that day's argument. We both entered the hall where the lady Zahia, for that was her name, sat behind a silk curtain, so as not to offend the custom of religion; and sat down upon benches, where her brother served us with fruit and other refreshment.

I had my name and titles taken to Zahia with the suggestion that we should hold an argument in divine jurisprudence and the interpretation of religious law. While we were waiting for an answer, my friend, the venerable Al-Salhani, fell in love with Zahia's young brother, a lad of most extraordinary beauty, and could not keep his eyes off him. Zahia noticed my companion's distraction and, looking at him closely, understood what was engaging his attention. She suddenly called his name, saying: "It seems to me, old man, that you belong to the number of those who prefer boys to girls."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"CERTAINLY," ANSWERED MY FRIEND with a smile. "And why?" she asked. Then said he: "Because Allah modelled the bodies of boys into admirable perfection, making them unlike those of women, and my tastes have always led me to prefer the perfect to the imperfect." She laughed behind her curtain, saying: "Very well, if you are ready to defend your opinion, I am equally ready to attack it." Then, when he had accepted the challenge, she continued: "Attempt to prove that men and boys are preferable to women and girls." Thereupon my friend said: "For half of my proof, I shall rely on logic; and for the other half on the authority of the Book and the Sunna.

“The Koran says: ‘Men surpass women because Allah has given them superiority.’ It also says: ‘A man’s share in an inheritance shall be twice that of a woman; the brother shall have double the portion of the sister.’ These holy words prove once and for all that a woman is only worth half a man.

“The Sunna teaches us that the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) assessed the value of a man’s sacrifice at double that of a woman’s sacrifice.

“From the point of view of pure logic, reason confirms this tradition. Let us ask ourselves simply which takes the first place, activity or passivity? Without doubt the answer will be in favour of activity. Now man is the active principle in life and woman the passive; therefore, past peradventure, woman is below man and a boy preferable to a girl.”

Zahia answered:

“Your quotations are correct: I agree that Allah in His Book preferred men to women in a general sense. But He did not speak specifically. If you seek for perfection, why do you only go for it to young boys? Surely you ought to prefer bearded men, venerable ancients, with wrinkled brows. For such have journeyed much farther along the way of perfection.”

He answered:

“I certainly would prefer them to old women, but that is not the question; for the matter under discussion is the seduction of boys. Surely you will admit that a woman has nothing which can be compared with the beauty of a youth; his supple waist, his fine drawn limbs, the tender mingling of colour in his cheeks, his gentle smile, the charm of his voice? The Prophet himself, in putting us on our guard against so evident a danger, said: ‘Do not look long

upon beardless boys, for their eyes hold more of temptation than the eyes of houris.' Remember, too, that the greatest praise that a man can find for the beauty of a girl is to compare it with the beauty of a boy. The poet Abu Nowas expressed that and more, when he wrote:

*Allah save her
In our joy!
Shout it forth:
She has thighs
Like a boy
And so can waver
As the palm of the banana
In the North.*

"If the beauty of boys was not noticeably superior to that of girls, why should poets make use of the comparison?

"Also a youth is not content only with his beauty; he can ravish our hearts with his language and the perfection of his manners. And how delicious a thing it is to see young down beginning to shade his lips and cheeks, those marriage beds of roses! Is anything in the world comparable with that charming period of transition? Abu Nowas said excellently again:

*"Over-red with the outcome of hairs."
O what a fault is theirs!
For now the face shows up
Like pearls in a bright green cup;
And as the hairs grow longer
It's a sign his thighs are stronger.
Roses swear faith to his cheek,*

*His eyelids speak,
His brows reply.
Also the down hides from your foolish eye
That face which gives a poppy to the wine
And has green shade to make the silver shine.*

Another poet said:

*They say I am blind to the hairs on that dear face,
Loving it still;
But I could not bear the white of it otherwise.
I loved the barren garden place;
How should I take it ill
When wet Spring paints my garden with surprise?*

And another said:

*I loved him when he had but roses;
Only a fool supposes
I could forget
Now he has added myrtle, violet*

And another, one out of a thousand, said:

*His cheeks and eyes compare
The numbers of their slain,
His sword is of narcissus,
Its handle is of myrtle . . .
Nay, beauty would dismiss us
And loose her final kirtle
If she could swear
She had got back again
The beauty of her world,
This child-hair curled.*

“Surely I have given you enough proofs that a lad’s beauty is greater than female beauty at any age.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZAHIA ANSWERED: “May Allah pardon you your fallacious arguments, unless, perhaps, you advance them merely as a joke. Be that as it may, the time has come for truth to triumph; therefore do not harden your heart but prepare to admit the verity of what I say.

“Tell me, in Allah’s name, where we may find a youth whose beauty is comparable with that of a young girl? A girl’s skin has not only the light and whiteness of silver but the softness of silk. Her waist is a branch of myrtle, her mouth a flowering camomile, her lips two moist anemones. Her cheeks are apples and her breasts are little ivory gourds. Light shines from her forehead and her brows ceaselessly hesitate as to whether they should meet or part. When she speaks there is a flash as of fine pearls; when she smiles, a river of sunlight flows out of lips sweeter than honey and softer than butter. The seal of beauty has made the dimple of her chin, and her belly is beautiful. The lines of her thighs are excellent, folding one over the other. Her flanks are fashioned all of one ivory and her feet are moulded of almond paste. Her bottom is full and not depressed, the waves of a crystal sea or mountains of the moon. Old man of weak understanding, do you not know

that kings, khalifats, and all the great of the annals, have bowed themselves to the yoke of women, considering it a glory? Mighty men have knelt before them, leaving riches, land, father and mother, and even kingdoms for their sake. On their account palaces rise to heaven, silks are woven and stuffs brocaded. Because of them amber and musk, which have a sweet smell, are sought over the whole earth. Their beauty has damned the dwellers in Paradise, has over-set the earth, and made rivers of blood to spring forth among all nations.

“You have cited from the Book, but it is more favourable to my contention than to yours. The Book says: ‘Do not look long upon beardless boys, for their eyes hold more of temptation than the eyes of houris.’ Now that is direct praise of the houris, who are women and not boys. I have noticed, too, that those who prefer boys and wish to describe them, compare their caresses to those of girls. They are not ashamed of their corrupt tastes yet rather glory in them, forgetting the words of the Book ‘Why do you seek out this love? Has not Allah created women for the satisfaction of your desires, that you may enjoy them as is meet? But you were ever an unrighteous people.’ When you philosophize on this subject, you simply seek to justify and flatter your corrupt desires. As for your poets, we know them well! The greatest of them all, Abu Nowas, spoke thus of a young girl:

*You have no hips
And you have cut your hair,
Also there lies a light shade even
Upon your lips.
Dear child, by these exceptions and this dearth*

*You'll have two kinds of lovers on this earth
And more in heaven."*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"AS FOR THE PRETENDED attraction of a beard in young men, a poet has answered that excellently:

*Wise lovers fled at the first ugly hair
Which charcoal-smutched that chin beyond compare.
When the white page is covered with black prose
Who but a fool would write his lyrics there?*

"Give thanks to Allah for uniting in women every joy of life and promising to prophets, saints, and all believers, marvellous girls for their reward in Paradise. If the All-Good had thought that there could be any pleasant lusts apart from women, He would have reserved them for and promised them to His faithful servants after their death. But Allah only mentions young boys as being servants of the elect in Heaven; He does not speak of them as having any other function. The Prophet himself (upon whom be prayer and peace!) had no sort of leaning in your direction. In fact he used to say 'Three things have made me love your earth: woman, perfume, and the beauty of a soul in prayer.' I cannot recapitulate my argument better than by quoting this verse of the poet:

*Between allurements of the young
(Now I give freedom to my tongue.)
A gulf is fixed.
To approach some is suave incense
But others, a deep brown offence
Within your garment mixed.
Who dare
Compare
A girl and boy—
What hardihood!—
For nard he would
Employ
An adder's tongue.
Between allurements of the young
A gulf is fixed.*

“But I see that this discussion has excited me too much and made me pass those bounds of modesty which no woman should cross in the presence of sages and old men. Therefore, I beg pardon of any who have found such criticism to make in what I have said, and I rely on them to use discretion in telling others of this argument. The proverb says: ‘The hearts of well-born men are tombs.’ ”

When Shahrazade had made an end of this tale, she said: “That, O auspicious king, is all I can remember of the Flowering Terrace of Wit and the Garden of Gallantry.”

“Indeed, Shahrazade,” answered King Shahryar, “these little tales have pleased me very much and disposed me to hear another longer story, such as you used to tell me.” “That is as I had hoped,” said Shahrazade, and she continued:

THE STRANGE KHALIFAT

IT IS RELATED that, one night, when the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid was suffering from sleeplessness, he called his wazir, Giafar Al-Barmaki, to him and said: "My breast is heavy; I would walk the streets of Baghdad and go as far as the Tigris, to distract myself for the rest of the night." Giafar at once helped the khalifat to dress himself as a merchant, and provided the same disguise for himself and Masrur, the sword-bearer. They left the palace by the secret door and walked the silent streets of Baghdad until they came to the banks of the river. There they saw an old boatman, about to wrap himself in his coverlet, before going to sleep on board his craft. They went up to him, saying: "Old man, we would be very much obliged if you would take us on board your boat and row us about for a little upon the river to enjoy the delicacy of the fresh breeze. Here is a dinar for your trouble." "What are you asking, my lords?" answered the old man in a terrified voice. "Do you not know the order? Do you not see the khalifat's boat coming towards us even now?" In their astonishment, they asked: "Are you sure that boat contains the khalifat himself?" "As Allah lives," replied the other, "is there anyone in Baghdad who does not know the appearance of the khalifat? It is Al-Rachid himself, my lords, with his wazir, Giafar, and Masrur, his sword-bearer. See, there are his mamelukes and singers; listen to the herald standing in the bows and proclaiming: 'It is forbidden to great or small, young or old, noble or simple, to be upon the river! Who disregards this warning shall have his head cut off or be hanged to the mast of his own boat!'"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AL-RACHID, WHO HAD NEVER given such an order and had not been on the river for more than a year, questioned Giafar with astonished eyes; but the wazir, who was equally at a loss, turned to the old boatman, saying: "Here are two dinars. Put us off in your boat and row us under one of the sunken arches, that we may see the passing of the khalifat and his suite without being seen ourselves." After some hesitation the boatman consented and, having embarked all three, put in his craft under the arches and covered his passengers with a black cloak, that they might be more invisible. No sooner were they hidden, than the boat drew near, lighted by torches and cressets which little slaves dressed in red satin, their shoulders covered with yellow mantles, their heads turbaned with white muslin, fed, from minute to minute, with aloe wood. Some stood at the prow, others at the stern, lifting their torches higher and crying the warning into the night. The hidden observers saw two hundred mamelukes ranged on each side of the boat, surrounding a central dais. This was surmounted by a gold throne where sat a young man, dressed in black and gold, flanked, on the right, by a man miraculously like Giafar, and, on the left, by the counterpart of Masrur, holding a naked sword. Below the dais sat twenty singers and musicians.

"Surely this must be one of our sons, Giafar,"

cried Al-Rachid, "either Al-Maamun or Al-Amin! Those other two are extraordinarily like you and Masrur; those singers and players much resemble mine; what do you think of all this? I can make nothing of it." "As Allah lives, I can make nothing of it either, Commander of the Faithful!" answered Giafar.

Already the lighted boat had passed beyond their sight. The old boatman, freed from his anxiety, cried out: "At last we are safe! No one has seen us!" When he had rowed from under the arch and landed his three passengers on the bank, the khalifat turned to him, saying: "Old man, are you sure the khalifat goes out in his illuminated boat like this every night?" "Indeed, my lord, he has done so for the last year," answered the boatman; and the khalifat continued: "We are strangers on our travels, with a strong taste for interesting and beautiful things. If I give you ten dinars, will you be waiting for us here tomorrow at the same time?" The old man joyfully agreed to this arrangement and the khalifat, taking leave of him, returned with his two companions to the palace, where they talked together of the night's strange happening.

Next day the khalifat, after spending the whole day in doing judgment, receiving his wazirs, chamberlains, emirs, and lieutenants, and forwarding the affairs of state, returned to his apartments at nightfall and again disguised himself as a merchant. When the time came, the three set out as before, and arrived without adventure at the spot where the old boatman expected them. Pushing off without delay, they again sheltered themselves under the arch and waited for the illuminated boat.

Before they had time to become impatient, they

heard the sound of music and the whole surface of the water was lighted up by the approach of the boat. Its lading was the same as on the previous night; there were the same mamelukes, the same guests and, on the dais, the same mock khalifat between the same Giafar and Masrur.

“O wazir,” said Al-Rachid, “I would never have believed this thing if I had been told of it!” Then turning to the boatman, he said: “Here are ten more dinars. Row us in the track of that boat. You need not be afraid, for they cannot see us, since we are in darkness and they in bright light. We wish to enjoy the beautiful illumination for as long as possible.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE BOATMAN ACCEPTED the ten dinars and somewhat fearfully began rowing in the wake of the boat, taking care not to venture into the circle of its lights. Soon they came to a park which sloped down to the river and saw the boat moored and the strange khalifat, with all his suite, disembark and go up into the pleasure grounds to the sound of music.

The old man hid his boat in the gloom and allowed his passengers to disembark. As soon as they were in the park, they mingled with the crowd of torch-bearers and strolled in the wake of the strange khalifat.

While they were thus following the procession, some

of the mamelukes recognised them as intruders and, seizing them roughly, led them into the presence of the young man. "How and why have you come here?" he asked; and they answered: "We are merchants, strangers to this country. We only reached Baghdad today and, walking at random, came to this place without knowledge that the garden was forbidden. We were strolling quite quietly when we were seized by your people and brought before you." "Since you are strangers to Baghdad, you need have no fear," said the mock khalifat. "If it had been otherwise you would certainly have had your heads cut off. Come with us now and be our guests for the evening."

The three followed in this strange train and came at last to a palace which could have no rival save in that of the khalifat himself. Over the door of it they read this inscription:

*Time used his paints in it
To decorate this place,
But now time faints in it.
Where art has most
Bequeathed her grace
The stranger is as welcome as the host.*

They entered a magnificent hall carpeted with yellow silk, where the strange khalifat, seating himself upon a gold throne, called upon the rest to be seated also. At once a feast was served of which all partook and afterwards, when the guests had washed their hands, drinks were set out upon the cloth and the cup went round spacioously. But when Haroun Al-Rachid's turn came, he did not drink; so the mock khalifat turned to Giafar, and said: "Why does your

friend not drink?" "It is a long time since he has given up wine," answered the wazir. "In that case he must have something else!" cried the host; and he ordered one of his mamelukes to carry a flask of apple sherbert to the khalifat, which the disguised Al-Rachid accepted and drank with considerable pleasure.

When wine had mingled with their reason, the mock sultan beat three times with a small gold stick and, at this signal, the two leaves of a large door opened at the end of the hall to admit two negroes carrying on their shoulders a small ivory throne, on which sat a young white slave as brilliant as the sun. When they had set the throne down facing the master of the feast and had placed themselves behind it, the slave took up an Indian lute and, after preluding in twenty-four different modes, returned to the first one and sang:

*How could you find a calm
When I was far and grieving,
Or any balm
When I was near and leaving?*

*Ah, empty is the perfumed gloom
Our coloured couch above,
And empty is the marble room
Of songs of love.*

As soon as the strange khalifat had heard this singing, he uttered a loud cry, tore down his fair diamonded robe, his shirt, and other garments and fell into a swoon. The mamelukes threw a satin cover over him, but not before Al-Rachid, Giafar, and Masrur had noticed that the young man's body was

covered with deep scars as of sticks and whips.

"As Allah lives," said the khalifat, "it is a pity that so beautiful a youth should bear such certain signs that he is an escaped criminal." Before Giafar had time to answer the mamelukes had dressed their master in a new and richer robe; and he had taken his place again upon the throne as if nothing had happened. Seeing his three guests leaning towards each other, he said: "Why this air of astonishment and these whispers?" "My friend was just saying," answered Giafar, "that he had journeyed over many lands and seen the fashion of their kings, without discovering any as generous as our host. He also expressed his astonishment at seeing you tear a robe which must have been worth at least ten thousand dinars. In fact he was just quoting this verse in your honour:

*Gift built his house in your right hand,
If gift should lose the key
Your left could find another kind
Of generosity."*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approaching morning and discreetly fell silent.

The Three-hundred-and-ninet

SHE SAID:

THE YOUNG MAN was delighted with this gift, and ordered Giafar to be given a thousand dinars and a robe as beautiful as the one he had torn. So again the drinking and conversation went on as before; but

Al-Rachid, who could think of nothing but the scars which he had seen, said to Giafar: "Ask him the cause of them." "It would be better to be patient and not to seem indiscreet," answered Giafar, but the khalifat exclaimed: "By my head, and by the tomb of Abbas, if you do not question him at once your soul will go begging for a body when we get back to the palace!"

The young man, who was again looking in their direction, noticed that they were whispering once more. So he called out: "What is this great secret of yours?" "Nothing but good," answered Giafar. Then said the mock khalifat: "I beg you, in Allah's name, to let me hear what you are saying." "My friend," answered Giafar, "noticed that your flanks, my lord, had been cut about with rods and whips, a sight which greatly astonished him. He was very anxious to know what terrible adventure had caused our master, the khalifat, to receive a chastisement so little sorting with his dignity." The young man smiled at this, and said: "Be it so! Since you are strangers, I am willing to reveal the whole matter to you. My tale is so prodigious and filled with marvel that, if it were written with needles in the corner of an eye, yet it would serve as a lesson to him who read it with attention." Then he said:

My lords, I am not the Commander of the Faithful, but simply Muhamad-Ali, son of the syndie of the Baghdad jewellers. When my father died, he left me much gold and silver, countless pearls, rubies, and emeralds, with wrought smith's work in precious metal; also he bequeathed to me buildings, lands, orchards, gardens, shops, and storehouses, and left me master of this palace with all its men and women

slaves, its guards and servants, its young boys and girls.

One day, as I sat in my shop surrounded by slaves ready to do my bidding, I saw dismount before my door, from a handsomely harnessed mule, a girl followed by three attendants of moonlike beauty. As I rose to do her honour, she came in and sat down, saying: "Are you not Muhamad-Ali, the jeweller?" "I am not only Muhamad-Ali, but your slave," I answered. "Have you some really beautiful trinket that is certain to please me?" she asked; and I answered: "I will show you all the most beautiful things in my shop; if any of them can suit you, I shall be happy beyond description. If you find nothing worthy, I shall deplore my bad fortune until the day of my death."

As I had a hundred jewelled collars of perfect workmanship in my shop at that time, I showed them all to her and she handled them and scrutinised them more expertly than I could have done myself. At last she said: "I should like something better than those." Now it so happened that my father, in the old days, had bought a quite small collar for a hundred thousand dinars and that I had kept it shut out of sight alone in a precious coffer. Therefore I brought the coffer and opened it ceremoniously in front of the girl, saying: "I do not think that any king, great or small, has the like of this."

The young woman glanced at the collar and then cried out for joy, saying: "I have wanted it all my life! How much is it?" "It cost my father a hundred thousand dinars," I replied, "if it pleases you, I shall be only too happy to offer it to you for nothing." She gave me a long look, and then said, laughing: "I will take it at the original price, plus five

thousand dinars by way of interest." "Dear mistress," I answered, "both the collar and its present owner belong to you. I have nothing more to add." "I have fixed the price," she answered with another smile, "and even at that I shall be in your debt." So saying, she sprang to her feet and, running from the shop, mounted her mule, crying over her shoulder: "My master, will you carry the collar for me and come to my house for the money? My day is milk to me because of you." Not wishing to insist further that the collar should be a gift, I ordered my slaves to shut up the shop and followed the girl on foot to her house.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I GAVE HER the collar and she, after begging me to be seated on a bench in the entrance hall to wait for my money to be counted out to me, disappeared into her own apartments.

As I sat in the hall, a young woman came to me, saying: "My master, be good enough to follow me into the antechamber, for the entrance hall is not intended for persons of your quality." Following her to the antechamber, I sat down on a stool covered with green velvet and waited, until another slave came to me, saying: "My mistress begs you to enter the reception hall and rest yourself there until the money is ready." Hardly had I reached the reception hall, when a curtain at the end of it was lifted and four

young slaves came towards me, bearing a gold throne on which the girl was seated, wearing the collar on the moonlight of her neck. Seeing her thus unveiled, I felt my reason go mad and begin to tear down the fortress of my heart. The lady signed to her slaves to retire, and came towards me, saying: "Light of my eye, should one who is all-beautiful, as you are, behave so cruelly to one who loves him?" "All the beauty of the world is yours," I answered. "If there is any which you have not absorbed to yourself, I, for one, have not seen it." Then said she: "Muhamad-Ali, I love you, and all that I have done today has been but a trick to bring you to my house." She leaned abandonedly over me and drew me to her, bathing me the while in the languor of her eyes. I took her head between my hands and kissed her again and again, while she pressed me closely against her loveliness as if she wanted to enter my heart in the flesh, even as she had done in the spirit. I knew that this was no time for retreat and wished to do what was right in such a scene. So I pressed my wooing in approved fashion and was not repulsed. I congratulated myself upon my rare good fortune and had become quite emboldened, when she said: "What would you do, my master?" I answered: "That which is usual." Then she said: "I cannot help you; for I am a pure maiden." Then, seeing the amazement written on my face, she continued: "If you think you have to do with some unknown woman undeceive yourself; for, I am the sister of the Wazir Giafar."

On hearing these words, my masters, I suddenly felt all desire fall into a deep and profound sleep and understood how indecorous it had been in me to pay any attention to the cries of my nature and to wish to quiet them with the

help of so high-born a lady. "As Allah lives," I said, "it was not my fault that I wished the child to share the hospitality which you showed to its father. You were too generous in letting me see the home fire behind the open door of your hospitality." "You have nothing with which to reproach yourself," she answered, "you will reach your end, but only by the legal road. With Allah's help, all may happen as we wish, for I am my own mistress and none may control me. Would you like me to be your wife?" "Indeed I would!" I answered; and at once she sent for the kadi and his witnesses, and said to them: "Here is Muhammad-Ali, son of Ali the late syndic. He asks me in marriage and has given me this collar as a dowry. I accept and consent." Without a moment's delay our marriage contract was written out and we were left alone. Slaves brought us wine and cups and lutes; and we drank together until our souls shone with the wine. She took a lute and sang:

*Time gave his wine in daily gilded bowls
To me,
Until I remember our torn souls
Not all unhappily;
Then in the garden close
He gave a hundred flowers with each your hue:
But, ah, in those
I could too soberly see
You.*

When she had finished singing, I took the lute and, after showing that I was master of it, chanted these words of the poet to a whispering accompaniment:

*O prodigal, by what extravagant art
Do you join bright water and red fire*

*In one small face,
And in my heart,
That little space,
Refresh as water, ravin like desire?*

After we had made an end of the singing, it seemed time to dream of the couch; so I lifted my bride in my arms and stretched her on an embroidered bed, which the slaves had prepared for us.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HAD REMOVED her garments, I saw that she was indeed a rare pearl, a creature of more loveliness than I had ever dreamed existed. All the joy of my life was concentrated in that night and I held her until the morning, as gently as a hand holds a dove with folded wings.

My happiness of this kind continued, not for a night, but for a whole month, in which I forgot my shop, my business, and my fair house itself. When the first day of the second month came, she said to me: "I must go away from you for a few hours, to the hammam and back. I beg you not to leave this bed, or to rise up at all until I return. Soon I will be with you again, light and perfumed from the bath." When she had made me swear solemnly that I would not quit the couch, she departed with two slaves bearing bundles of towels, linen, and fresh garments.

Now, my masters, she had scarcely left me for a

minute when, as Allah lives, I saw the door open and an old woman come into the room. She approached me with respectful greetings, saying: "O Muhamad, the lady Zobeida, wife of the Commander of the Faithful, has sent me to beg you to come to the palace, since she wishes to see and hear you. Many have spoken to her in terms of the greatest admiration of your manners and the beauty of your voice. Therefore she greatly desires to know you." "As Allah lives, good aunt," I answered, "the lady Zobeida does me too much honour, but I cannot leave the house until my wife returns from the hammam." Then said the old woman: "My child, I advise you, in your own interest, not to delay for a moment, unless you want the lady Zobeida to become your enemy. Her enmity is very dangerous; so come now and talk with her. Afterwards you can return to your house."

These last words decided me to break my oath and I followed the old woman to the palace where she introduced me into the queen's presence without any difficulty.

The lady Zobeida smiled upon me and bade me approach, saying: "Light of my eye, are you not the lover of the wazir's sister?" "I am your slave," I answered; and she continued: "Indeed they did not exaggerate when they painted the charm of your manners and your voice to me. I wished to discover for myself the tastes of Giafar's sister; now I am satisfied. But my pleasure will not be complete unless you sing me something." "Love and honour!" I answered; and, taking a lute which a slave handed to me, played a short prelude and sang two or three stanzas about happy love. When I had finished, the lady Zobeida said: "May Allah crown His work by giving you added perfection, if that be possible, young man!

I thank you for having come to me. Now hasten home before your wife gets back; that she may have no reason for thinking that I wish to rob her of your love." Taking advantage of this permission, I kissed the earth between her hands and left the palace.

When I got back to the house, I found my wife already sleeping on the bed and she did not wake when I approached her. But when I lay down at her feet and began gently to caress them, she suddenly opened her eyes, and kicked me so violently in the groin that I rolled off the bed. "Perjured traitor," she cried, "you have broken your vow and gone out to visit the lady Zobeida! As Allah lives, if I had no fear of shame and did not loathe to confess my intimacy with you in public, I would go to the queen even now and teach her not to debauch the husbands of other women! As it is, you shall pay for both." With that she furiously clapped her hands, and cried: "O Sawab!" and her chief eunuch ran in, a negro who had always frowned upon me. "Cut off this traitor's head, this liar's head!" she cried; and Sawab, drawing his sword and bandaging my eyes with a strip torn from the skirt of his robe, bade me say my prayers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Three-hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT THAT MOMENT, all the slaves of the house, great and small, young and old, to whom I had always been

kind, ran in and cried to their mistress: "Spare him, for he did not know the gravity of his fault! How was he to suppose that a visit to the lady Zobeida, your enemy, would anger you more than any other action in the world? He was ignorant of the rivalry between you. Spare him, O mistress!" "Be it so," she answered, "I will spare his life; but he must carry away an indelible memory of his indiscretion." Thereupon Sawab replaced his sword with a terribly supple stick and beat me cruelly upon the most sensitive parts of my body. Then discarding the stick in its turn, he took up a whip and murderously lashed my flanks and private parts five hundred times. That, my lord, is the explanation of the scars which you have seen upon me.

After witnessing my punishment, my wife had me taken up and thrown into the street like a load of dung.

I struggled to my feet as well as I was able and dragged myself, all bleeding, to my own house, where I fell down in a swoon in those halls which I had left so long.

When I came to myself after many hours, I called a learned and light-handed bone-setter to me, who delicately bound my wounds and brought about my cure with balms and unguents. After remaining for two months without movement upon my bed, I rose, took a bath, and visited my shop. There I sold every precious thing that it held at a sacrifice and, with the money thus realised, bought four hundred young mamelukes which I habited richly, and the boat in which you saw me tonight. I chose out one of them, who resembled Giafar, to be my companion upon my right hand, and upon my left hand I set a false Masrur, to carry my sword of justice. Then, that I should

forget the shame which I had undergone in the relief of borrowed majesty, I dressed myself as the khalifat and rowed each night upon the river with lights and songs. I have spent a whole year in this high illusion, to cure the memory of the chastisement which I received at my wife's hands because I had unwittingly meddled in a womanish dispute. That is my sad tale, good folk. I have but to thank you for joining us to-night in such a friendly fashion.

When the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid had heard this story, he cried: "Praise be to Allah, who has given a cause for every effect!" Then he rose and, begging the young man's leave to depart, returned to his own palace with his companions, pondering a way to right the wrong which the two women had done to his host. At the same time Giafar grieved that his sister should have been the cause of such injustice, especially as it was now certain to be made known to all the palace.

Next morning, as the khalifat sat clothed with all his authority among his emirs and chamberlains, he said to Giafar: "Bring me the young man who entertained us last night." The wazir went out and soon returned with the false khalifat, who bowed low before Al-Rachid and made him compliment in verse. Much charmed by this, Haroun bade him approach and sit by his side, saying: "O Muhamad-Ali, I have summoned you that I may hear from your own mouth the tale which yesterday you told to three strange merchants. It is both astonishing and full of useful lessons." Quite abashed, the young man answered: "O Commander of the Faithful, I cannot speak until you have given me the kerchief of immunity." The khalifat threw him his handkerchief and then the young man told his tale again without suppressing a

single detail. When he had finished, Al-Rachid asked: "Would you still like your wife to return to you, in spite of the wrong she did?" "All which came to me from the hands of the khalifat would be welcome," answered the young man, "for our master's fingers are the keys of kindness and his actions are not only actions, but jewelled collars about the necks of all." Then said the khalifat to Giafar: "Bring your sister to me, O wazir!" Giafar obeyed, and Al-Rachid said to the woman: "Tell me, O daughter of Yahia, our faithful emir, do you recognise this man?" "Commander of the Faithful," she answered, "since when have women learned to know strange men?" "I will tell you his name," returned the khalifat smiling. "He is called Muhamad-Ali, and is the son of the jewellers' late syndic. That which is past is past; in the present, I wish to give you to him as a wife." "The gifts of our master are ever generous," she replied.

At once the khalifat called the kadi and his witnesses, and had the two young people most strictly married again, that their happiness might be perfect. Also he kept Muhamad-Ali with him as one of his intimate friends until the end of his life. That is how Al-Rachid used his leisure to unite those who were sundered and bring happiness to those whom Destiny had betrayed.

But do not think for a moment, O auspicious king, that this tale, which I only told you as a contrast to the short anecdotes, can equal, or come anywhere near equalling the marvellous Story of Rose-in-the-Bud and World's-Delight.

THE TALE OF ROSE-IN-THE-
BUD AND WORLD'S-DELIGHT

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID to King Shahryar:

IT IS RELATED that there was once in the antiquity of time and the passing of the ages, a powerful and glorious king who had a wazir named Ibrahim. Ibrahim had a daughter who was the marvel of all grace and beauty, and added to a perfection of carriage and sweetness of behaviour a most unusual intelligence. She loved the joy of friends and the gaiety of wine, fair faces, rare verse, and any tales of wonder. The delicacy of her perfection turned every head and heart; a poet of that time said of her:

*I also lie in the snare
Of this fair huntress of the Turks,
Who, being learned in the sages' works,
Once said, before I was aware:
"Although my article is accusative
Your verb will not rise up and govern it."
What answer could I give
To so much wit?
"The rules have been revised of late," I
said,
"If you consent
I'll show you without fail
That now the head
Of my most weighty argument
Comes at the finish of my long-drawn tail."*

This sweet and beautiful girl was called Rose-in-the-Bud.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING, WHO delighted to have her by his side at every feast, both for her wit and her beauty, was used each year to hold a festival and to profit by the presence in his palace of the chief persons of his kingdom to play at ball with them.

One day, as the king's guests were playing at ball and Rose-in-the-Bud was seated at her window watching the game, the contest became suddenly fast and furious and the wazir's daughter, observing with more attention, noticed among the players a young man of infinite beauty, with smiling teeth, slim waist, and mighty shoulders. She took such pleasure from the sight of him that she could not prevent herself, but favoured him with long glances. At last she called her nurse, saying: "Do you know the name of that exquisite and distinguished youth?" "They are all so beautiful, my child," answered the nurse, "I do not see the one you mean." "I will point him out," said Rose-in-the-Bud; and at once, taking up an apple, she threw it at the young man, who thereupon turned round and looked up at the window. He saw Rose-in-the-Bud, smiling and fair like the moon journeying through a dark space of the night; and in that second, even before he could lower his eye, he fell in love. As he murmured to himself these lines of the poet:

*An arrow's hum,
Surprise,
A wound, abasement!
Bowmen
Or eyes?
Or did it come
From foemen
Or a casement?*

Rose-in-the-Bud turned to her nurse and said: "Now can you tell me his name?" "He is called World's-Delight," answered the nurse. The young girl shook her head with pleasurable emotion at these words and, falling back upon her couch, moaned to herself and improvised these verses:

*Son of a wise father,
For he called you World's-Delight,
O rising of the full moon
Upon our dark!
God drew the oval of your eyes
With night
On His white dawn.
O strength,
Reeds in the wind are clumsy
For I have seen you.*

When she had made this poem, Rose-in-the-Bud took a sheet of paper and carefully wrote it; then she folded the paper and placed it in a little bag of embroidered silk which she hid beneath the cushion of her couch.

The old nurse who had seen these signs of love in the girl talked to her of one thing and of another until Rose-in-the-Bud fell asleep; not until then did she

take the paper from below the cushion, read it and, after determining the depth of her mistress's passion, put it back in the same place. When the girl woke the old woman said to her: "My child, I am your best and tenderest adviser; therefore I tell you that the passion of love is a violent passion, melting a heart of steel and bringing sorrow and sickness to the body. But if the sufferer opens her heart to another the hurt is lessened."

"O nurse," answered Rose-in-the-Bud, "do you know the cure for love?" "I do," replied the old woman, "it is to enjoy the lover." "How can that enjoyment be obtained?" asked the girl; and the nurse continued: "The first thing to do is to exchange gentle letters, filled with salutation and compliment; that begins to bring two friends together and is the first step in cutting knots and avoiding complications. If you have anything hidden in your heart do not fear to tell me; for I can keep a secret and you will never find anyone more ready to satisfy your least desires with eyes and head, and most discreetly to carry letters."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ROSE-IN-THE-BUD FELT her reason totter for very joy; but she was careful not to betray her feelings. "No one knows my secret yet," she said to herself:

"it will be better not to tell this woman until I have had certain proof that he loves me." But as this thought was passing through her mind, the nurse continued: "My child, last night a man appeared to me in a dream, saying: 'Your young mistress and World's-Delight are in love with each other and it is fated that you must help them by carrying letters and performing discreet services; otherwise you will miss a great reward.' I simply tell you what I saw; it is for you to decide." "O nurse," exclaimed the girl, "can you really keep a secret?" "Can you doubt it," replied the other, "when I am known to be the essence of the essence of chosen hearts?" Without further hesitation the girl showed the old woman the paper on which she had written her verses and gave it to her, saying: "Carry this to World's-Delight and bring me back an answer." At once the nurse departed and, finding World's-Delight in his house, first kissed his hands, then made him many courteous compliments and, lastly, gave him the letter.

World's-Delight unfolded the paper and read its contents; when he understood all the delicious news which it carried, he wrote these lines upon the back of the note:

*The wings of my heart beat so,
I cannot hold them;
He flies abroad and sings.*

*I say to my friends:
"These tears come from a sickness of the eyes."
Poor heart!*

*I slept a free man on my bed,
I waked
And love held a silk whip above me.*

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*I come telling a tale of torture.
Written with tears
On the white sand of your pity.*

*The moon has woven a veil for you
And the stars would pierce it;
The palms did not know how to sway
Until you passed.*

*Come to me,
But that would weary you.
I send my soul as a present,
Come to me!*

He folded the leaf and kissed it; then he gave it to the nurse, saying: "Mother, I rely upon you to favour me with your mistress." "I hear and I obey," she answered; and at once hurried back with the note.

Rose-in-the-Bud carried the letter to her lips and to her brow before she opened and read it. When she had well understood what World's-Delight would say, she wrote beneath his poem the following answer:

*Be patient,
You who have fallen in our nets,
For we have no proof your heart is torn.*

*Our heart is torn,
Also we are afraid.*

*The night of separation comes down upon us,
But our heart is a red fire.*

*Your sleeplessness lies upon our bed,
Our body moves restlessly
All through the night.*

*Silence is best,
Our veil must not be lifted
Among your friends.*

Ah, but our body cries for you!

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HAD finished writing this, she again folded the paper and gave it to the nurse, who at once left the palace. But Fate willed that she should meet the wazir's chamberlain and that he should say: "Where are you going at such an hour?" "To the hammam," she answered trembling, and went upon her way; but her trouble had been so great that she had let fall, without noticing it, the note which had been insecurely fastened in a fold of her sash. So much for her.

The note fell to the ground near the palace door, where it was picked up by one of the eunuchs and carried at once to the wazir, who happened, after a visit to his harem, to be seated upon a couch in the reception hall. The eunuch interrupted his calm reflection by holding out the note, saying: "I found this on the ground, my lord, and hastened to bring it to you." The wazir opened the paper and, after reading the poems, made sure, by examination, that two of them were in the handwriting of his daughter, Rose-in-the-Bud.

He at once sought out his wife, the girl's mother, with tears coursing down his beard. "Why do you weep, my master?" cried the woman; and he replied: "Look at this paper." She took the note and saw at once that it was a correspondence between Rose-in-the-Bud and World's-Delight. Tears came to her eyes, but she controlled her soul, and said to the wazir: "My lord, tears are useless in this matter. It were better to think of a way to safeguard your honour and hide our daughter's shame." After she had comforted her husband for some time, he said: "I fear this passion for our child! Surely you know that the sultan is very fond of Rose-in-the-Bud? My concern is a double one: I fear for my daughter because she is my daughter and I fear for her because she is a favourite with the sultan. What is your thought in this matter?" "Give me time to make the prayer for guidance," she answered; and, placing herself in the attitude for it, went through the pious practices which the Sunna recommends in such a case.

When she had finished her prayer, she said: "In the midst of the sea Bahr Al-Kunuz there lies a mountain called the Mountain of the Bereaved Mother where none may land without great difficulty. I advise you to build a home there for our daughter."

The wazir, approving of his wife's advice, resolved to have an inaccessible palace built upon this mountain and to confine his daughter there, with provisions for a year, to be renewed during the following years, and a troop of attendants to bear her company. He therefore called together a band of masons, carpenters, and architects; and sent them to the mountain where they built an inaccessible palace such as the eye of man had never seen.

When he received word that this was done, the wazir

provisioned a caravan for the journey and, visiting his daughter in the middle of the night, ordered her to depart. Rose-in-the-Bud was stricken with the violent pangs of separation and shed abundant tears when she reached the outside of the palace and saw that the final preparations had been made. Suddenly the idea came to her to inform World's-Delight of her violent passion, which might have melted the hardest rocks and started streams of tears, by writing the following lines upon the door:

*Here is a perfumed kiss, O house,
For he will pass in the morning.
I know not where I go
On this swift journey.
Tonight the birds will sing among the leaves of pain:
Pity, parting, pity, parting!
But already
I have drunk the aloed cup of Destiny,
And there is memory in the wine.*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HAD traced these lines on the door, she took her place in the palanquin and the caravan started. They crossed sown and desert, hill and plain, and came at last to the sea Al-Kunuz, where they pitched their tents and set about constructing a great boat. When it was ready they put out to sea,

taking the young girl and her attendants with them.

As the wazir had ordered the leaders of the caravan to come back across the sea when they had confined Rose-in-the-Bud in her palace, and then to destroy their boat, they hastened to fulfil his command in every particular and at last came back to him, weeping for what they had done. So much for them.

World's-Delight rose on that morning and, after making his prayer, mounted his horse and rode towards the palace to serve the sultan. As he passed the wazir's door, he saw the verses written upon it and nearly lost consciousness. The reading of them lit a quenchless fire in his racked entrails. He returned home, but could not stay in one place because of his wretchedness; when night came, he feared that he would reveal his secret to the folk of his house and therefore went out, all haggard and perplexed, to wander at random in the streets.

He walked all that night and through the next morning, until the great heat and his consequent thirst obliged him to rest a little. He sat down beneath a shady tree beside a little stream and lifted the water in the hollow of his hand to drink. But he found no taste or refreshment in it, for, as he leaned over the water, he saw that his face had become ravaged and yellow in a single day. Also he felt his feet much swollen by his wanderings. He wept abundantly and said these verses, while the tears coursed down his cheeks.

*I am drunken with love,
But the cup is held to my lips
And I must drink again.
Why should I not wander in the ways,
Forgetting food?*

*There is no joy in all these roads,
For I cannot meet my beloved
Or one who has known my beloved
Or one who has known one
Who has known my beloved.*

When he had said these verses, World's-Delight wept until he had made a pool on the earth beside him; then he rose and left that place. As he was wandering in despair through plains and deserts, there appeared suddenly before him a great-maned lion with a mighty neck. Its head was as large as a dome, the stretch of its jaws more than a door, and its teeth had the appearance of elephant's tusks. Seeing this beast World's-Delight gave himself up for lost; turning towards Mecca he pronounced his act of faith and prepared to die. Then he suddenly remembered that he had read in ancient books that a lion is very sensible to flattery and can easily be tamed through its delight in words. Therefore he said to the animal: "Lion of all the forests, lion of all the deserts, fearless lion, renowned chieftain of the brave, sultan of beasts, you see before you a poor lover, worn out with separation, whose passion has brought him to the doors of death. Hear me and have compassion upon my grief."

At this speech, the lion retired a little and, sitting down on its behind, lifted its head towards World's-Delight with pleased movements of its tail and two front paws. Encouraged by these signs, World's-Delight recited the following:

*O brave tumultuous lion,
I am no prize
For I am thin,
My body dies,*

*O brave tumultuous lion,
Your foes would grin
If you ate me
And say you could
Not catch for food
A living enemy.*

*But if you have a mind
To be unkind,
O brave tumultuous lion,
My body hates
Its loneliness,
And you would hurt me less
Because your claws are not as sharp as
Fate's,
O brave tumultuous lion..*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE LION heard these lines his eyes filled with tears. He came gently up to World's-Delight and began to lick his feet and hands. Then he signed to him to follow and set off across the desert. World's-Delight went after his guide for a long time; when they had climbed a high mountain and dropped down the other side, they came upon plain traces of the caravan. The young man hurried forward with his eyes fixed upon the track, while the lion, being assured that his friend was now going in the right direction,

returned by the way he had come to mind his own concerns.

World's-Delight followed in the trace of the caravan until he came to a sea moaning with all its waves and there he lost the tracks upon the sand. Realising that the party which he sought had taken ship from that place, he lost all hope of again seeing his mistress. With abundant tears he said over this poem to himself:

*There are no footsteps on the sea,
Though all the sea
 Could not put out my heart;
And no deep sleep
 By any art,
Although the sea is deep.
Great Euphrates
My tears' mate is,
 I am lord of rain
And the rivers
 Of my pain
Grow to greater rivers.*

*I throw the worthless coin of life
To play with life,
 But if I win, I cannot win;
For my own love,
 A traitor's sin,
Pulls down the fort above.
Willows growing by the streams
Of my dreams,
 Half a world between us,
Would that gentle death
 Had seen us
In the breast of death.*

When he had made an end of these lines, he wept so long that at last unconsciousness came to him and he went into a deep swoon. As soon as he came to himself he looked to left and right and, seeing that he was in a desert, was taken with a sudden fear of savage beasts. He therefore climbed a high mountain at the top of which he heard the sound of a human voice. Listening attentively, he came to the conclusion that the voice was that of a hermit who had left the world, to live a life of devotion in a cave which could be seen among the rocks. He knocked three times at the door of this cave and then, as no one came forth, sighed deeply and intoned these lines:

*How may desire win home,
How may the soul forget,
When all the chiefs of all the griefs
About my head have met
To whiten its young jet?*

*Harsh flowers fell in the wine
Until its taste was rude;
I fed the fire of my desire
With bitter aloe wood
Which grew in solitude.*

*I went to find my dear
And found a verse instead;
It dashed the stuff of all my love
In ruin round my head
And left my soul for dead.*

*Yet, loser of the world,
If I could have my choice
I'd choose again that life of pain
Where living men and boys
May suffer and rejoice.*

As he was finishing these lines, the door of the cavern opened and he heard a voice cry: "The mercy of Allah be upon you!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE ENTERED THE CAVE and wished the hermit peace. "What is your name?" asked the holy man. "I am called World's-Delight," he answered; and at once told his story from beginning to end. When it was finished the hermit wept, saying: "O World's-Delight, I have lived in this place for twenty years without beholding a human being until yesterday. I heard the sound of tears and voices and, looking down from this mountain, saw a caravan with tents pitched upon the beach. I watched while a group of men constructed a boat and, going on board, made for the open sea. A short time afterwards some of them returned and, when they had destroyed their boat, went back across the desert. I think that those who went and did not return were the folk for whom you are looking, O World's-Delight. I understand your grief and I excuse it. There was never a lover who was not acquainted with sorrow." Then the hermit recited these lines:

*O World's-Delight, you think that I have passed
Beyond all human sympathy at last,
Not knowing that a touch of passion's hand*

*Winds and unwinds me like a linen band.
Even as a child I found love's worst and best,
Drinking its fury from my mother's breast;
I was a known practitioner of love
When my young comrades were not old enough.
Seeing my frenzy, older men of wit
Would use my name as synonym for it.
And this one thing I learned from passion's page,
In lusty youth and in my meagre age,
The single sin in love, for which regret
Can in no wise atone, is to forget.*

The hermit clasped World's-Delight in his arms and the two wept together until the mountains echoed their grief. Then they both swooned away.

When they recovered consciousness they swore a mutual oath to be brothers in Allah (exalted be His name!); and the hermit said: "I will pray tonight and ask for the guidance of Allah in your affair." "I beg you to do so," answered World's-Delight. So much for them.

When Rose-in-the-Bud was taken to the mountain of the Bereaved Mother and had entered the palace prepared for her, she examined the place attentively; and finding it both fair and comfortable, began to weep and say: "As Allah lives, O dwelling, you have all delights save one. My lover is not here." Then as she had seen that there were many birds in the island, she ordered nets to be spread for their capture and each one, as it was taken, to be placed in a cage within the palace.

As she leaned out of a window and gave herself up to memory, desire rose in her like a flame not to be put out by any tears. The burden of these verses came to her:

*I would out-sing the sorrows of these song-birds
Because of love,
But I am afraid.*

*I am burnt up
More easily than a wooden twig,
I am slim ash.*

But he cannot see this.

*You need not be ashamed, sun of warm gold,
To make each ray a kiss
For my beloved;
He is more worthy of your light
Than any moon.*

*Sun of warm gold,
You have never shone on river reeds
More fair than he.*

*Impudent roses,
You could feign his right cheek,
If you were the roses of his left.*

*The water of my beloved's mouth
Could put out hell.*

*He is my suffering and my delight,
He is my beloved.*

When night came down with his shadows, Rose-in-the-Bud felt her desire grow hotter and the memory of her woes flame up in agony.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE CRIED ALOUD these lines:

*With night there beats a white-hot sun
Of memory upon my bed.
Burning,
I lie all fire,
Turning
Again, again
To every angle of desire
But one.*

*I could not say farewell that day;
I charge you, night, to say it now,
Seeing
My little sleep,
"Being
All hot to keep
The letter of her vow."
Oh, say!*

Thus Rose-in-the-Bud lamented.

When the hermit had well prayed he said to World's-Delight: "Go down into the valley and bring me a load of palm fibres."

World's-Delight did so and the hermit wove them into a great net, such as is used for carrying straw. Then he said again: "In the valley there grow gourds which dry, as soon as they are ripe, and fall from their stems. Go down and fill this net with dry

gourds; then throw all into the sea and climb on top; the current will bear you out and carry you to the place where you would be. May good fortune attend you!" World's-Delight bade farewell to his friend and, climbing down into the valley, made the suggested preparations.

When he was well out to sea, floating upon his net of gourds, a violent wind arose and carried him beyond the hermit's sight. For three days and three nights he was the plaything of a terrible sea, buffeted by waves, carried to the top of headlong crests, sunk into mighty gulfs, until at last Fate cast him at the foot of the mountain of the Bereaved Mother. Hungry and thirsty he crawled up the sand, as giddy as a hen, and came in a short time to a place of running streams and fruit trees sung about by birds. Having eaten and drunken he made his way inland and soon saw, white against the horizon, a mighty palace with steep unfriendly walls. Finding the door of it shut, he sat down in that place and did not move for three days. At the end of this time the door opened and a eunuch appeared, who asked him whence he came and what chance had brought him to the island. "I am from Ispahan," he answered, "I was sailing the seas with my merchandise when the ship went down and the waves carried me to this shore." On hearing this, the slave wept and threw his arms about the neck of World's-Delight, saying: "Allah preserve you, O face of friendship! Ispahan is my own country. My cousin, the daughter of my uncle, the dear love of my childhood, dwells there still. One day our tribe was attacked by a greater and I was carried off as part of the spoil. Since I was still a child, I was emasculated to increase my value, and I was sold as a eunuch." After this the slave, with many expressions of wel-

come, led World's-Delight into the vast outer court of the palace.

There he saw a wonderful fountain, surrounded by trees from whose slim leafy boughs hung silver cages with gold doors. In these, birds of various kinds were singing agreeable praises to their Creator. Going up to the first cage, World's-Delight saw it held a dove, whose cry seemed to say: "Generous! Generous!" Hearing the word, the young man fell down in a swoon; at last he recovered and, with a deep sigh, murmured this song. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

*Though you have felt your heart grow dim,
O silver sleepy dove,
Be not ashamed of praying,
But tune your throat to saying:
"O generous one!" to Him
For He is love.*

*But all your passion is a bird's,
No man may surely say
Whether the meaning
Of your tired keening
Is: "Break, my heart, in minor thirds."
Or: "I am gay."*

As soon as he had said these lines, he wept until he

swooned again. When he recovered consciousness, he went up to the second cage, which contained a wood-pigeon, who seemed ever to be singing: "Glorify Him!" The young man sighed deeply and said:

*The wood-pigeon murmurs: "Glorify Him!"
 Why should I not murmur: "Glorify Him!"
 For I am no sadder than the wood-pigeon?
 And yet the slow honey of the voice of the wood-
 pigeon
 Comes not from her lips
 And the slow blood of the heart of the wood-pigeon,
 Filling the ruby,
 Is not my heart.
 If I opened the door of his cage
 The wood-pigeon would murmur: "Glorify Him!"
 Therefore why should I murmur: "Glorify Him!"?*

Then World's-Delight went up to the third cage, in which was a nightingale. Seeing a stranger the bird began to sing and the young man answered its song, saying:

*Allah has set aside the nightingale
 To be our tears.
 Each prayer for pity
 Which, being dumb, we could not make
 In any years,
 Must agonise, make pale
 His ditty
 For our sake.*

*Allah has set aside the nightingale
 To be our prayer.
 The nights, which over-long*

*Wore down our passion to a burning thread,
He hears not in our tale;
And so leans down instead
To this bird's song
To find them there.*

After this he went up to the fourth cage and saw within it a bulbul, which at once began to sing. With a deep sigh, World's-Delight answered the song:

*The dawn which is so pale and sweet
Makes lovers' hearts to beat
And the gold of noonday's heat
Gilds her two wayward feet. . . .
The bulbul sings this.*

*The scent of rain on garden flowers
Stabs this desire of ours,
Dew-watered musk has powers
On lovers' hours. . . .
The bulbul sings this.*

*We cannot find the needed song
The coloured paths along,
And the light buds among
Are silent for love's wrong. . . .
The bulbul sings this.*

*When she has been away
And then brings back the day
Her lovers kneel and say:
We prank our hearts for May. . . .
The bulbul sings this.*

World's-Delight went further on until he came to a

cage of such remarkable workmanship that it surpassed all the other cages put together.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE CAGE CONTAINED a wild pigeon with a rich collar of pearls about its neck; its plaintive amorous singing, its air of sadness, so affected World's-Delight that he sobbed and said:

*Wild pigeon of the leaves,
Brother of lovers,*

*If you have seen an arrow killing
From far
The mild-eyed deer
By rills
Of summer hills.*

*If you have heard an arrow singing
From far
And then strike sheer
The wings
Of airy things,*

*Wild pigeon of the leaves,
You are
Brother of lovers.*

When the pigeon heard this song, it came out of its dream, moaning and moving with so much melancholy that it seemed, in its own language to be singing this:

*Now I remember my free flying
And my songs for
The brave grey breast of my mistress
Bright in the branches.
Men came with flutes to the forest
But I turned to the night songs
Of the brave grey throat of my mistress
Bright in the branches.
Men came with nets to the forest
And I saw no more
The brave grey breast of my mistress
Bright in the branches.*

World's-Delight turned to his friend, the eunuch from Ispahan, saying: "Whose palace is this? Who built it and who lives in it?" "The wazir of a certain king built it for his daughter that she might be free from happening and accident," answered the eunuch, "She is confined there with a train of servants and the inner door is only opened once a year when new provisions come for us."

"I have reached my goal," thought World's-Delight, "but, ah, how long will be the waiting!" So much for him.

Since her coming to the palace, Rose-in-the-Bud had not known the joy of eating and drinking, nor the joy of sleep. As time went by the torment of her heart increased and she would wander through the palace looking in vain for a way of escape. A day came when she could control herself no longer; bursting into tears she murmured these lines:

*They made my torture-chamber a prison
And my prison a torture-chamber.*

*They heated irons
In the fire of his absence,
And gave me burning drugs
Distilled from my desire.*

*Who shall break the rack
Built from my sighing,
Or pierce the wall
Raised from my grief,*

And I run drunken-footed to my love?

Then Rose-in-the-Bud climbed up to the terrace of the palace and, by means of strong Baalbek fabrics which she tied carefully together, let herself down the outside of the walls and reached the ground in safety. Dressed just as she was in her fairest robe, and with a collar of great diamonds about her neck, she crossed the flat desert and came to the sea shore.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE SAW A fisherman whom the wind had cast upon that coast, seated in his boat and fishing. The man caught sight of her at the same moment, and thinking that she was some appearance from another world, began fearfully to push off from the shore. Rose-in-the-Bud called and signed to him and, when he stayed to listen, spoke to him as follows:

*I am no ghost from the sea mist,
Fisherman,
But a lover burned in fire
And never kissed.
Lend me your boat to find desire,
Fisherman,
And I'll give pearls of the sea
To be your hire.
He is the absent half of me,
Fisherman,
And I the half on fire;
So come to me.*

Hearing these lines, the fisherman wept, groaned, and lamented the days of his youth, when he had been conquered by love, tormented by passion, tortured by desirous dreams, and burnt in the fires of ecstasy. He answered:

*Tears were the pasture of my youth,
A broken heart my only wear,
I bled; I used to tell the fair
Desire was love and love was truth.*

*Then do you wonder I am bold
To bring these poor young lovers weal?
If they feel half I used to feel
I ought to get a heap of gold.*

When the fisherman had said this he brought his boat to the shore, exclaiming: "Come into my boat and I will take you anywhere you wish." Rose-in-the-Bud accepted this invitation and the fisherman rowed strongly away from the shore. Soon a high wind rose behind them and urged them forward till land was lost

and they could know nothing of their direction. At the end of three days the storm abated, the wind fell, and Allah (may His name be exalted!) beached their boat beside a city.

As the fisherman's boat came to ground the king of that city, whose name was Dirbas, was sitting with his son at a window in his palace and looking out to sea. Perceiving in the boat a girl as beautiful as the full moon lying upon night's unclouded breast, wearing a collar of great diamonds and having magnificent rubies in her ears, he imagined that she must be some king's daughter and at once hurried down to the shore through the seaward door of his palace.

By the time he reached the boat it had been moored, and the young girl was calmly sleeping. As the king watched her she opened her eyes and began to weep. Then said he: "Whence come you? Whose daughter are you? And what is the reason of your journey?" "I am the daughter of Ibrahim, wazir of King Shamiq," she answered, "The reason of my voyage is strange, my adventure is remarkable." With that she told the king the whole of her story from beginning to end, and finished by weeping and sighing and saying:

*My lids are rotten with my tears
And yet my love tale's wondrous beyond weeping,
For I was never paid
As man pays maid
And time is keeping
The arrears,
O World's-Delight!*

*Your love had been to magic school,
Your eyes were art-come-up with olden cantraps,*

*Each whisper was a sin
Taught by the Jinn,
Your lips were mantraps
For the fool,
O World's-Delight!*

After this she told the king further details of her life and then, bursting into tears, improvised this song: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

*Sire, sire,
Who would have thought this thing,
That tears could turn to fire,
O stranger king;
Who would have thought my mind
Could change a tear to blood,
O kingly, kind;
Or who that the sea would
A living dead girl bring
To you, O mild, O good,
O stranger king?*

When the king heard Rose-in-the-Bud's tale, he was convinced of the depth of her love-longing and said compassionately: "Have no fear, for you have reached your goal. I am ready to help you by bringing you to your lover." Then the king recited these lines:

*Delightful maid,
There is no need to be afraid;
Even today I have made
A merchandise cavalcade
And bade
Strong riders, richly paid,
Carry a brave parade
Of musk and of brocade
King Shamik to persuade
To lend his aid
And be the powerful shade
In which our head is laid,
Therefore there is no need to be afraid,
Delightful maid.*

So saying, the king went out to his soldiers and, bidding his wazir prepare innumerable bales of the intended presents, commanded him to set out at once and carry them to King Shamik. "Also," said he, "you must bring me back a young man called World's-Delight. Say to the king: 'My master seeks you for an ally and wishes the alliance to be sealed by a marriage between Rose-in-the-Bud, daughter of your wazir, and World's-Delight, a youth in your own train. Give this young man to me and I will conduct him to King Dirbas that the contract may be drawn up in his presence.'"

Then King Dirbas wrote a letter to King Shamik and gave it to his wazir with a repetition of his orders concerning World's-Delight. "If you do not bring him back," he added, "you shall be relieved of your high position." "I hear and I obey!" answered the wazir; and at once set out for the lands of King Shamik.

When he arrived, he greeted King Shamik from

King Dirbas and gave him the presents and the letter. But to his surprise, King Shamik shed many tears, saying: "Alas, alas, where is World's-Delight? He has disappeared and we know not where to seek him. If you can give him back to me, O wazir, I will gladly pay double the worth of the presents which you have brought me." Then, with many groans, King Shamik said:

*Give him to me
And you shall have for fee
Blue burning diamonds from my treasury.*

*He was the moon
In night's blue burning noon,
Whose simplest words were songs to a low tune,*

*My prince of palms,
Whose branches in his calms
Bore golden-mannered speeches like gold psalms.*

*Enough of trees,
My child was more than these,
Himself blue burning noon and the relenting
breeze.*

Then he turned to the visiting wazir, who had brought the presents and the letter, saying: "Return to your master and tell him that World's-Delight has been absent for more than a year and that the king, his master, does not know what has become of him." "But, my lord," the wazir answered, "the king, my master, told me that if I did not bring back World's-Delight, I should be cast from my high office and might never again set foot in the city. How dare I return?"

King Shamik turned to his own wazir, Ibrahim, father of Rose-in-the-Bud, saying: "Take a strong escort and accompany this envoy, helping him to seek in every place for World's-Delight." "I hear and I obey!" answered Ibrahim, and at once set out, accompanied by a troop of guards and the other wazir, to seek for World's-Delight.

They journeyed for many days, and each time they met with caravans or wandering tribes they asked news of World's-Delight, saying: "Have you seen a young man of such and such an appearance?" But always the strangers would answer: "We do not know him."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEY ENQUIRED THROUGH cities and villages, and hunted every plain and mountain, until they came to the sea. There they took ship and, in the course of time, saw the mountain of the Bereaved Mother rising above the waves.

Then said the wazir of King Dirbas to the wazir of King Shamik: "Why did that mountain receive its name?" "I will tell you," answered the other, and he said:

"Of old there was a Jinnia, of the race of the Chinese Jinn, who met a mortal in her journeyings and learned to love him. Fearing the anger of the Jinn if the thing became known, and yet being unable

to control her passion, she sought for some solitary place where she could hide her lover from the eyes of the Jinn, and at last found this unknown mountain which lay apart from the passage of men and fiends. She brought her lover through the air to this island and lived with him here, only leaving, from time to time to make a necessary appearance among the Jinn. Several times she became pregnant by her lover and bore many children on the mountain. Thus it happened that merchants, who chanced to sail along this coast, would hear the children crying; as the sounds seemed very like those of a mother who had lost her young, they would say to each other: 'There must be some bereaved woman upon that mountain.' Such was the origin of the name."

This tale and the astonishment of the other wazir had brought them ashore and to the palace gate. In answer to their knocking, a eunuch came forth and, recognising his master, the wazir Ibrahim, father of Rose-in-the-Bud, kissed his hand and led the two newcomers into the palace.

In the courtyard, Ibrahim noticed among the crowd of servants, a man of wretched appearance, who, though the old man was far from recognising him, was none other than World's-Delight. He asked his people the meaning of the stranger's presence there, and they answered: "He is a poor merchant who was shipwrecked on the island, after having lost all his goods at sea. There is no harm in him, for he is a saint, bound ever in the ecstasy of prayer." Without troubling further about the matter, the wazir entered the palace.

When he did not find his daughter in her apartment, he questioned the young girl slaves who were there, and they replied: "We do not know how she departed

from this place. All we can say is that she did not stay long among us." Hearing this, the wazir burst into tears and improvised these lines:

*House, haunted with bird music,
Of proud thresholds,*

*Sobbing with desire came the lover,
Your doors were wide for him;
We looked in gladness to discover
Your hidden bride for him.*

*Chamberlains of luxurious lot
Grew ruddy there;
Brocade was everywhere,
House, haunted with bird music,
But she was not.*

The wazir Ibrahim wept again when he had made an end of these verses. "None may escape from the decrees of Allah," he exclaimed, "nor trick the fixture of eternity!" So saying, he went up on to the terrace and found the Baalbek fabrics, fastened by one end to the battlements and hanging down the walls. As he stood there, realising and sorrowing for the manner of his daughter's grief-guided flight, he saw two great birds, one a crow and one an owl, slowly passing the terrace. Taking their appearance for an evil omen, he sobbed and said:

*Late have I come to the haunt of my dear,
She is not here
And, lo!
Wheeling an owl and a crow.
Craw, craw,*

*You broke love's law,
Cruel were you.
To whoo, to whoo,
To whom?
To these poor two.
So, so
In the gloom
The owl and the crow.*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE CAME DOWN weeping from the terrace and ordered the slaves to search the mountain for their mistress. The slaves hunted for many hours but did not find her. So much for them.

When World's-Delight heard for certain of the flight of Rose-in-the-Bud he uttered a great cry and fell senseless to the ground. Seeing him lie there unconscious, the folk of the palace thought that he had been lifted into a divine ecstasy and that his soul was drowned in the glorious contemplation of God. So much for him.

As soon as the wazir of King Dirbas saw that Ibrahim had lost all hope of finding his daughter and World's-Delight, and that his heart was very low because of this, he resolved to return to the city of his king, although he had not succeeded in his mission. He made his farewells to the father of Rose-in-the-Bud, saying, as he pointed to the poor young man on

the ground: "I wish to take this saint with me; for perhaps his merits will bring blessing upon me; perhaps Allah may soften the heart of my master, so that he does not deprive me of my office. Later I will not fail to send the holy man to Ispahan; for that city is not far from our land." "Do as seems good to you," answered Ibrahim.

The two wazirs separated, each taking the road to his own country; and the wazir of King Dirbas, who was far from guessing his identity, took World's-Delight along with him, still in the swoon and mounted on a mule.

The swoon lasted for the first three days of the journey, but on the fourth day World's-Delight, who had before been ignorant of all which passed about him, recovered consciousness, murmuring: "Where am I?" A slave who was by, answered: "You are travelling with the wazir of King Dirbas," and at once ran to inform his master that the holy man had come to himself. The wazir immediately sent his guest a draught of sugared rose-water which brought his strength back to him. After that the journey went on and the caravan soon came to the outskirts of the city.

King Dirbas sent a message to his wazir, saying: "If World's-Delight is not with you, beware of showing yourself before my face." The unhappy wazir did not know what to do, for he was completely ignorant that Rose-in-the-Bud was with the king, and why the king desired to find World's-Delight, and especially that the young man who was always fainting in his company was World's-Delight. Also, you must remember that World's-Delight did not know where he was being taken or that the wazir had been sent out in search of him.

Recalling that World's-Delight had recovered consciousness, the wazir went to him, saying: "O holy man of Allah, I wish for your advice in a cruel perplexity. My master, the king, sent me upon a mission in which I have not succeeded; now that he knows of my return, he has warned me that I may not enter the city if I have failed." "What was your mission?" asked the young man; and when the wazir had told him the whole story, he mastered his emotion, and continued: "Fear nothing! Go to the king and carry me with you. I take it upon myself to bring about the return of World's-Delight." "Are you telling the truth?" cried the delighted wazir; and when the other replied that he was, the old man mounted with him on horseback and speedily sought the presence of the king.

When they were before the face of the Dirbas, the sultan cried: "Where is World's-Delight?" For answer, the holy man advanced, saying: "O great king, I know the hiding place of World's-Delight." The king signed to him to approach and, when he had done so, asked in a moved voice: "Where is that?" "Very near here," replied the other. "But tell me first why you want him, before I hasten to place him in your hands."

"I will gladly do so," said the king, "but we must be alone." He ordered his people to fall back and taking the young man with him into an inner chamber, told him the whole story from beginning to end.

Then said World's-Delight: "Bring me rich robes and, when I have put them on, I will instantly make World's-Delight appear." The King had a sumptuously ornamented garment brought to him and World's-Delight, when he had put it on, cried: "I, even I, am World's-Delight, the desolation of the

envious!" Piercing all hearts with the dark glances of his eyes, he improvised these lines. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

*She was a coloured shadow of delight
Going before me in the dark of night,
Burning my pains away.
My only water-streams were tears for love,
But they were cool and sparkling and enough
With her to light me. Nay,
My very self a river washing hell
But kissing the reed bank of heaven as well
With her to light the day.*

*But heart and head have watched together so,
My heart, being drained of sleep, is white as snow,
My head is like white frost;
How may I know that the long book of grief
Is closed at last, without the darling chief
Young chapter being lost;
How can I know that we may find, in truth,
A golden youth in a gold youth of youth
When that sweet gold were most?*

When World's-Delight had made an end of this, King Dirbas said: "As Allah lives, I see that you each loved the other with the same sincere passion. You are two flashing stars in the sky of beauty. Your tale is a prodigy and your adventures pass the telling!" Then, when King Dirbas had told him the whole

tale of Rose-in-the-Bud, the young man asked: "O king of time, where is she now?" "She is in my palace," he answered; and at once sent for the kadi and witnesses, who drew up the marriage contract for the two young people. After that Dirbas loaded World's-Delight with honour and riches and sent a courier to tell King Shamik all that had happened.

King Shamik rejoiced exceedingly and sent a letter back to King Dirbas, saying: "As the contract has already been put in order I greatly desire that the feast and the consummation of the marriage should take place in my palace." Also he prepared camels, horses, and a great train of attendants which he sent to fetch the bride and bridegroom.

When this letter and escort arrived, King Dirbas gave a great present in gold to the lovers and, after adding to their train, bade them farewell.

It was a memorable day when they arrived at Ispahan in their own country; the city had never seen so fair a day. King Shamik called together every musician in the confines of his kingdom and gave mighty feasts of rejoicing for three whole days, casting gold to the people and distributing numerous robes of honour.

When the feast was finished on the first night, World's-Delight went into the bridal chamber of Rose-in-the-Bud and, because they had hardly seen each other since they had met again, they threw themselves into each other's arms with a joy that passed the boundary of tears. Rose-in-the-Bud improvised these lines:

*See, the yellow lamp of joy abating
All the black shades of our waiting
To the grief of those
Who were our foes.*

*Now the little winds of love are cooling
Us, who had an ardent schooling
And ate burning fruits. . . .
There are the flutes. . . .*

*These are not the salt tears of our grieving,
But fresh silver waters weaving
Nets to drown in joy
A girl and boy.*

They sprang together and remained close pressed
in each other's arms until they fell limp for joy.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of
morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY CAME out of their lethargy, World's-
Delight improvised these lines:

*These are the hours we deemed once,
Merged in a bed divine now,
Impossible-silver-seamed once.*

*Our bed is silver hung with sea yellow
But fairer is my bed-fellow
Than it, or anything the sky below.*

*Over us floats God's sign now,
These are the hours we dreamed once,
Proving that she is mine now.*

The two lovers clasped each other again and, with mad impetuous caresses, crushed pleasure between them. Until they were drowned in love, they tempted his thousand different ways. Their delight, their youth, their happiness, their pleasure, and their joy made seven days and seven nights pass without notice. It was not until they saw the musicians come that they understood that they were at the end of the seventh day of their marriage. In her surprise Rose-in-the-Bud improvised these lines:

*I won to him in spite of sentinels.
On virgin silks, on velvets, he has pressed me,
And mattresses of feathers of rare birds.
What need had I of wine when he caressed me
And, with his words,
What need of song?
Present and past are in a popped dream
And only seem;
Though seven days and nights were long
If spent in else.
Here are the girls to say:
"God make your day
One night
(Why were they sent in else?)
With World's-Delight."*

When she had recited these lines World's-Delight embraced her an incalculable number of times and then improvised the following:

*I have drunken the perfumed sherbet of her eyes
And gone outside the world.
We have been curled
Against each other's heart, and lover-wise;*

*Have lain as dead,
Have leapt,
Have slept
But little, I can vouch,
Forgetting on our couch
The bitter nights, which would have frozen us,
In a sweet rhythm of fire,
For God has chosen us
To be desire.*

Then the two rose and, going out of their chamber, gave to all who were in the palace gifts of money and presents of rare robes. Afterwards Rose-in-the-Bud gave orders to her slaves that the hammam of the palace should be cleared for her especial use. "Cool of my eyes," she said to World's-Delight, "I now so want to see you in the hammam, where we can be alone and at our ease." A sudden wave of happiness came over her and she made up this song:

*Boy, without whom I may not go
To any place, I love you so,
Come to the hammam; let your eyes
Make a fire in cool paradise.
We will burn scent of nard and lie
Naked in its blue wizardry;
Dreaming above each other's flesh,
We'll pardon Fate her clumsy mesh
And whisper praise to the Most High
That He has laid us thigh to thigh . . .
Then, when you bathe I'll watch and sing:
Oh, bathe for ever, sweet my king.*

When she had said these lines the two lovers went to the hammam and passed agreeable hours there.

Afterwards they returned to the palace and spent their lives in the most intense felicity until they were visited by the Destroyer of pleasures, the Separator of friends.

Glory be to Him who moves not, the Eternal towards whom all lives and things converge!

But do not think, O auspicious king, continued Shahrazade, that this story is like *The Magic Tale of the Ebony Horse*.

Then said King Shahryar: "I have been delighted with the new verses said by these lovers, O Shahrazade. Now I am ready to hear you tell that magic tale; for I have not heard it."

So Shahrazade said:

THE MAGIC TALE OF THE EBONY HORSE

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the ages, a great and powerful king of the Persians whose name was Sabur. He was not only the richest and wisest monarch of his time, but also the soul of generosity and benevolence, so that his hand was never weary of opening to any who called upon him for help. He had a large hospitality for those who only sought the barest shelter from him and could comfort the broken-hearted with the sweetness of his discourse and the amenity of his actions. To the poor he was ever charitably disposed; the gates of his palace were always wide to the stranger; but, in the severity of his justice, the oppressor could find neither grace nor pardon.

King Sabur had three daughters, three fair moons in the night sky, or three wonderful flowers shining in a well-kept garden; also he had a son who was called Kamaralakmar, the moon of moons.

Each year it was the king's custom to give two great festivals to his people; one at the beginning of Spring, which was the feast of Nau-Roz, and the other in Autumn, of Mihrgan. On these two occasions all the gates of his palace were opened, alms were distributed, pardons were called through the streets by heralds, new officers were created, and the lieutenants and chamberlains of the courts were advanced in their positions. The people came from all the ends of the vast empire to render homage to their king and to do him pleasure on these two days of festival by making presents of slaves, eunuchs, and other valuables.

During one of the spring festivals the king, who had a great love of science, geometry, and astronomy, was seated on his throne when three wise men presented themselves before him, masters of secret knowledge and hidden arts, who could mould the images of things with a perfection which confounded the beholder and were deeply versed in those mysteries of which ordinary folk know nothing. They had come to the city from three several countries and each spoke a different language; the first was Hindi, the second Roumi, and the third a Persian from the confines of the king's own land.

The Hindi sage kissed the earth between the king's hands and, after having wished him joy and happiness upon that day, offered him a truly royal present: a man of gold incrustated with rare diamonds, who held a golden trumpet in his hand. "What is the use of this figure, O sage?" asked King Sabur; and the other answered: "My lord, his use is in this admirable

virtue: if you set him up at the gate of your city he will be a sleepless guardian of it; for, if an enemy approaches, he will divine him from afar and, raising the trumpet to his lips, blow a blast which shall paralyse your foe with fear and kill him with terror." "As Allah lives," cried the king, "if what you say is true, I promise to realise your every wish and least desire!"

The Roumi sage kissed the earth between the king's hands and offered him a vast silver basin, in which was a gold peacock surrounded by twenty-four gold peahens. King Sabur looked with astonishment upon the thing, and then said: "O sage, what is the use of this peacock and these peahens?" "My lord," answered the other, "each time that an hour passes of the day or night, the peacock pecks one of the twenty-four peahens and mounts her, with a great beating of his wings, thus marking the hours until all the females have been mounted. Further than that, when the month has passed, he will open his mouth and the crescent of the new moon will appear in his throat." Then cried the king in a marvel: "As Allah lives, if what you say is true, you shall want for nothing!" The wise man of Persia then kissed the earth between the king's hands and, after formal compliments and good wishes, offered him a horse made from the blackest and rarest ebony, inlaid with gold and diamonds, and bearing a saddle, bridle, and stirrups such as are not seen even upon the horses of kings. King Sabur, wondering and quite put out by the beauty and perfections of the horse, asked what its virtues might be. "My lord," answered the Persian, "the prodigious use of this horse is that, when it is mounted, it carries its rider through the air with the speed of light, taking him wheresoever he would go and covering in a day the year's journey of a horse of flesh and blood."

Astounded by these three prodigies appearing to him upon the same day, the king cried to the Persian: "As Allah lives, who created all beings and gave them food and drink upon the earth, if what you boast is proved true, I undertake to satisfy your least desires and realise your most hidden wishes!"

For three days the king put his presents to the proof, making the sages display the qualities of each. And, even as had been promised, the gold man blew his gold trumpet; the gold peacock pecked and mounted his twenty-four gold peahens; and the Persian sage, seated upon the ebony horse, rose in the air and, after describing a vast circle with extraordinary speed, came gently to earth on the spot from which he had risen.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT FIRST KING SABUR was stupefied by what he saw; then he so trembled with joy that he nearly fell upon the ground; and lastly he said to the wise men: "Illustrious sages, now that I have proved the truth of your words, it but remains for me to fulfil my promise. Ask all that you desire and it shall be given you upon the instant."

The three answered: "Since our master the king is satisfied with us and our presents, and leaves us the choice of recompense, we ask for his three daughters in marriage, for we greatly desire to become his sons-in-law. It is a matter that can in no way trouble the

king; also kings never go back upon their promises." "At once I grant what you desire!" answered the king; and forthwith he called the kadi and witnesses to prepare the marriage contract of his three daughters with the three sages.

It happened that while they were talking the king's three daughters were seated behind a curtain in the reception hall and heard what was said. So the youngest looked closely at the sage whom she would have to marry and behold! he was a very, very old man, at least a hundred, if not more. His scanty rests of hair were white with time, he had a wagging head, moth-eaten eyebrows, and split and tumbling ears; his beard and moustaches were dyed and lifeless, his red bleared eyes squinted, his yellow furrowed chaps hung limp beside his face, his nose was like a gross black artichoke, his face was wrinkled as is a cobbler's apron, his teeth jutted like those of a wild pig, and his lips were hanging and trembling like a cock's wattles. In a word, the old sage was a thing of horror, a compost of monstrous ugliness going to make a supreme deformity of the time and the most plain creature of that age. Beyond those features which I have told, he had nearly toothless gums from which sprang fangs instead of dog-teeth, making the old man look like one of those Ifrits who frighten children in deserted houses or set hens screaming in the henroost.

On the other hand, the youngest of the three princesses was the fairest and sweetest of all her century; to look at her more delighted than to behold a young gazelle. She was suaver than the meadow breeze and brighter than the full moon; she was truly formed for the games and works of love. She moved, and the branches were put to confusion in their balancing; she

walked, and the roe-deer grew clumsy in its leaping. She surpassed her sisters in white beauty.

When she saw the sage who had been allotted to her, she ran to her room and, falling face downward upon the ground, began to tear her robes and claw her cheeks and sob and sigh exceedingly.

While she was in that state, her brother, Prince Kamaralakmar, who loved her dearly and preferred her to his other sisters, returned from hunting and, hearing her cries, sought her in her chamber. "What has happened?" he asked, "Tell me quickly; hide nothing from me." Beating her breasts, she cried: "O dear and only brother, I will hide nothing from you. I tell you that, even if the palace is straitened before your father, I am ready to go out from it; and if your father is set on committing odious sin, I will leave him and flee away. I ask no provision for the journey from him, for Allah will provide."

Then said Prince Kamaralakmar: "But tell me what this means, my sister; what is it that has so troubled the humours of your body?" "Dear and only brother," answered the princess, "my father has promised me in marriage to an old sage, a horrible magician, who brought him an ebony horse as a present. The man has surely bewitched the king and abused him by some perfidy. I am resolved to die rather than give myself to his senile ugliness."

Her brother began to calm and console her with caresses and pleasant words until he had reassured her; then he hurried to his father, saying: "What is this I hear of a sorcerer to whom you have promised my little sister in marriage? What is this present which he has brought you and which can so persuade you to kill my sister with grief? The thing is not just and shall not happen."

The Persian, who was near by, heard the prince's words and was thrown into a fury of mortification; but the king answered: "Kamaralakmar, my son, if you had seen the horse this wise man has given me you would not be in such a taking."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventeenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING WENT with his son into the great court of the palace and had his slaves bring out the horse.

When the young prince saw the horse he was delighted with its beauty, and being an excellent rider, leapt lightly upon its back, thrust his feet into the stirrups, and spurred the wooden sides. As the steed did not move, the king turned to the sage, saying: "Go and see why it remains motionless; help my son and he will doubtless help you to accomplish your desires."

The Persian, who hated the prince because he had opposed his sister's marriage, went up to him, where he was seated in the saddle, saying: "Do you see that gold peg on the right of the pommel? That is the mechanism of ascent; you have but to turn it."

At once the prince turned the peg, and behold! the horse rose in the air with the quickness of a bird, so high that the king and those who were with him lost sight of it in a few minutes.

Seeing his son disappear and not return even at the end of several hours of anxious waiting, King Sabur

was puzzled and alarmed. "O sage," he said to the Persian, "what must we do to bring him back?" "Master," answered the other, "I can do nothing; you will not see your son again until the resurrection. He would not give me time to explain the use of the left-hand peg, by which a descent is made; but, trusting to his self-sufficient ignorance, went off with the lesson unlearned."

King Sabur was filled with a fury of anger. In his rage he ordered his slaves to beat the Persian and throw him into the darkest dungeon of the city; then he himself tore the crown from his head, beat himself in the face, and pulled out handfuls of his beard. Returning to his palace, he caused all the doors to be shut and set himself to sobbing, groaning and lamenting, together with his wife, his three daughters and all the people of his court. Their joy was turned to affliction and their happiness to despair. So much for them.

The horse rose and rose with the prince into the air until it seemed that he would touch the sun. When he realised his danger and the horrible death that awaited him in those parts of the sky, he bitterly repented his rashness and said within his soul: "It is certain that the wise man meant to destroy me because I interfered between him and my little sister. What must I do now? There is no power or might save in Allah! Surely I am lost beyond recall! . . . And yet there must certainly be a second peg, like the other, to bring this thing to earth again." With that, as he was both intelligent and skilful, he sought all over the horse and at last found, on the left side of the saddle, a very little screw no larger than a pin's head. "There is no other," he said, and pressed down upon the screw. At once the upward movement of the horse began to slow, the animal stayed for a moment motionless in the

air, and then began to descend as quickly as it had risen. Yet, as it approached the surface of the earth, it began to go more slowly and at last alighted without even a shock, allowing its rider to breathe calmly and reassure himself.

As soon as the young Prince Kamaralakmar well understood the management of the horse and the screw, he rejoiced and thanked Allah who had delivered him from certain death. Then, turning first the peg and then the screw and pulling the bridle to left and right, he began to exercise the horse forwards and backwards, up and down, sometimes with the quickness of light, sometimes at a walking pace, until he had thoroughly mastered all its movements. When he was quite certain of its power, he rose to a moderate height and journeyed straight forward at an easy pace, so that he could enjoy the prospect which unrolled itself below him upon the earth. Thus he was able to behold at his ease all the marvels of land and sea and admire countries and cities which he had never seen or known in his life before.

Among the cities which spread themselves beneath his gaze he saw one in which the houses and other buildings were distributed with a charming symmetry in the midst of a land laughing with rich green, furrowed by many water-courses, and abounding in pastures over which leapt troops of gazelles.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS KAMARALAKMAR EVER loved to distract himself with new sights, he said to himself: "I must know the name of this city and the land in which it is"; and began to circle round the city, pausing in the air over the most beautiful parts of it.

When the sun dipped to the horizon and the day was ended, the prince thought to himself: "As Allah lives, I will find no better place than this city in which to pass the night. I will sleep here and tomorrow at daybreak return to my kingdom, to my friends, and the people of my house. I shall be glad to tell my father all that has happened to me and describe to him what my eyes have seen." Looking about him to choose a safe spot where he might pass the night and stable his strange horse, his eyes were attracted by a tall palace in the middle of the city, flanked by embattled towers and guarded by forty black slaves in coats of mail, armed with lances, swords, and bows. "This is a good place," he said and, pressing the screw, guided his horse until it alighted like a tired bird upon the terrace of the palace. "Praise be to Allah!" cried the prince as he leapt from the saddle; then, as he looked over and examined his steed, he continued: "As Allah lives, he was a master craftsman who fashioned you so perfectly! If the Highest spares my life and brings me back to my father, I will load that learned man with benefits and make him taste of my generosity."

Already night had fallen, but the prince remained upon the terrace until all the palace should be asleep. When it was late, being tortured with hunger and

thirst, for he had not eaten or drunken since he set out, he said to himself: "A palace like this cannot lack victual," and, leaving his horse upon the terrace, descended the stair in search of something with which to stay his pangs. Soon he came to a large courtyard paved with white marble and transparent alabaster which reflected the light of the moon under the night; he marvelled at the beauty of the building of the palace but, look as he might to right and left, he saw no living soul and heard no sound of human voice. After a hesitation of perplexity, he said to himself: "The best thing I can do for the moment is to climb up again to the terrace and pass the night by the side of my horse; tomorrow, when the day begins to lighten, I will mount again and go my way." As he was about to put this project into execution, he saw a light in the interior of the palace and, moving towards it, discovered that it came from a lighted torch placed before a harem door, at the head of a bed on which a black eunuch lay asleep. This slave snored thunderously and looked like an Ifrit under the orders of Sulayman or one of the Black Jinn. He was stretched on a mattress across the door and blocked it better than a tree trunk or a bench; the hilt of his sword sparkled furiously in the torch-light and, above his head, his bag of food hung from a granite pillar.

At sight of this horrible negro young Kamaralakmar murmured in a terrified whisper: "I put my trust in the power of Allah! O master of earth and sky, you who have already saved me from certain death, help me again and be my safety in this place!" So saying, he lightly detached the black man's bag of provisions and, stealing away, opened it. Finding that it contained food of the finest quality, he began to eat. When he had completely emptied the bag, he went to

the fountain basin in the courtyard and stayed his thirst with the pure fresh water which gushed from it. Then he went back to the eunuch, returned the bag to its place and unsheathing the slave's sword, took it away with him while the fellow still lay snoring in his sleep.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AFTER THIS THE prince went forward into the palace and came to a second door covered by a velvet curtain. Passing through that, he found himself in a hall of marvels, where was a great bed of the whitest ivory, patterned with pearls, rubies, and hyacinths, and guarded by four young girls who slept upon the ground. He went up to the bed to see who might be in it and beheld a young girl lying upon it with her abundant hair her only covering. She was so fair that one would have taken her, not for the moon rising on the eastern rim, but for a second and more marvellous moon come fresh from the hands of God. Her brow was a white rose, her cheeks were two anemones blushing lightly, enriched on either hand by a delicate spot of beauty.

Seeing such grace and charm and elegance, Kamalakar well-nigh fell swooning or dead; when he might a little master his emotion, he went up, trembling and shaking with desirous pleasure, and kissed the sleeping girl upon the right cheek.

The child woke with a start at the feel of this kiss and, opening wide eyes, saw the prince standing beside her pillow. "Who are you and whence do you come?" she cried. "I am your slave and the lover of your eyes," he answered. Then said she: "Who led you here?" and he replied. "Allah, Fate, and my good fortune."

Princess Shamsalnahar, for such was her name, instead of showing fear, said to the young man: "Are you by chance the king's son of Hind who yesterday asked me in marriage and whom my father would not accept as a son-in-law on account of his ugliness? If you are he, as Allah lives, you are far from ugly and your beauty has already subdued me, my lord." Then, as he stood there as radiant as the shining moon, she drew him to her and they embraced each other; drunken with beauty and youth they exchanged a thousand caresses stretched in each other's arms and said a thousand follies during a thousand games, with a thousand tender or bold speeches in each other's ears.

While they were rejoicing in this way, the handmaidens woke and cried out, seeing the prince with their mistress: "O lady, who is this young man?" "I do not know," she answered, "I found him at my side when I came out of sleep. I think he must be the youth who yesterday asked my hand in marriage of my father." But the girls, confounded with emotion, cried out: "As Allah lives, this is not the youth who asked for you yesterday, for he was hideous, and this young man is sweetly beautiful and surely of a noble line. The other was not worthy to be your slave." So saying, the attendants went and woke the eunuch at the door and filled his heart with fear, saying: "How is it that you, the guardian of the palace

and the harem, let men come into us while we sleep?"

The negro jumped to his feet and would have drawn his sword, but found his scabbard empty. This increased his terror, so that he was trembling all over his body when he lifted the curtain and entered the hall. When he saw the handsome young man on the bed with his mistress, he cried out: "My lord, are you a man or a Jinni?" "Miserable slave and most evilly disposed of black negroes," answered the prince, "how dare you confound the sons of the kings of Persia with Ifrits or Jinn?" So saying, he rose in fury like a wounded lion and seized his sword, exclaiming: "I am the king's son-in-law. He has married me to his daughter and empowered me to come into his presence."

"My lord," answered the eunuch, "if you are really a man and not a Jinni, our young mistress is worthy of your beauty and you better deserve her than any other king's son in the world."

After this the eunuch ran into the presence of the king, uttering loud cries, tearing his garments, and covering his head with dust. Hearing his lamentations the king exclaimed: "What calamity is this? Speak quickly and shortly, for you have brought a trembling to my heart."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"O KING," answered the negro, "run to the help of your daughter, for a Jinni in the body of a king's

son is with her and has taken possession of her! Run! Hurry!"

The king fell into a fury and was on the point of killing the eunuch; then, controlling himself, he cried: "How did you dare to lose sight of my daughter and let this demon go into her, when I had charged you to watch over her day and night?" Then, with every appearance of madness, the king ran to the princess's apartment, and found the girls pale and trembling by the door. "What has happened to my daughter?" he cried, and they answered: "O king, we do not know what happened while we were asleep, but when we woke we found what we took to be the full moon in bed with our mistress, a young man of perfect beauty who was talking with her in a manner both delicate and reassuring. We have never seen anyone like this youth. When we asked him who he was, he told us that he had been married to the princess by the king. More than that we do not know; nor can we say for certain whether he is a man or an Ifrit. Whichever he may be, we can assure you that he is amiable, well-intentioned, modest, highly-born, and quite incapable of the least misconduct; for, when one is so handsome, nothing that one does may be called misconduct." The king's anger cooled at this assurance; gently and with many precautions he lifted the curtain a little and saw a most charming prince, whose face seemed made of moonlight, lying beside his daughter on the bed and whispering to her.

At this sight his paternal jealousy rose again, together with a mighty fear for the honour of his daughter. Leaping through the curtain he bounded towards the pair, sword in hand, as furious as a ghoul. When the prince saw him coming, he asked the girl if this was her father and, when she replied that it was,

leapt to his feet, seizing the sword, and made so terrible a war-cry in the king's face that he recoiled abashed. Kamaralakmar then made as if to run him through, and the king, realising that he was the weaker, re-sheathed his sword and adopted a conciliatory pose. As the young man was almost upon him, he said in his most courteous and amiable voice: "O youth, are you a man or a Jinni?" "As Allah lives," cried the young man, "if I did not regard you as my equal and think highly of your daughter's honour, I would already have shed your blood. How dare you confound a prince of the royal line of Persia with Jinn or demons? If we had a mind it would be sport to us to sweep you from your throne as by an earthquake and to level your glory with the dust!"

The king was filled in equal measure with respect for this young man and fear for himself, so he hastened to answer: "If you are really a king's son, how did you dare to come uninvited into my palace, take my daughter, and destroy my honour, proclaiming that I, even I, who have killed so many kings and princes, because they would have forced me to give up my daughter, had married you to her secretly? . . . And who will save you from my might when I order my slaves to put you to the worst of deaths?"

"In truth," answered Prince Kamaralakmar, "I am astonished that you should be so short-sighted and heavy-witted. Tell me, where will you find a better suitor for your daughter? Have you ever seen a bolder young fellow, or a richer in every way?" "Possibly not," answered the king, "but if you marry my daughter, it must be before the kadi and witnesses; for a secret marriage breeds an ill name." "You speak truly," answered the prince, "but do you

not see that, if you call your guards to me, both your honour and your kingdom will be lost by the public exposure? There is nothing left for you to do, O king, except to listen to what I have to say and to follow my counsels in this matter." "Speak then, for I will hear you a little," said the king.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID PRINCE KAMARALAKMAR: "You have the choice of two ways: either you must engage with me in single combat and, if you are beaten, cede your throne to me, or else you must leave me all night with your daughter and in the morning send against me your whole force of horse and foot and slaves and . . . but first tell me how many there are." "I have forty thousand warriors," answered the king, "without counting my slaves and my slaves' slaves, who are as many again." "That is well," returned the prince. "Draw them up in battle array against me at dawn and say to them: 'This man wishes my daughter in marriage and I have made it a condition that he shall fight against you all and overthrow you. This he means to do.' Then leave me to fight against them; if they kill me, your secret will be safe; if I put them to flight, you will have found a son-in-law to do honour to any king."

The king fell in with this plan, though his mind was all abroad at so much hardihood and assurance.

In his heart of hearts he was certain that the young man would perish in his insane combat and that thus the honour of the kingdom would be saved. He sent the eunuch to find his wazir and order him to assemble all his troops and hold them under arms. The eunuch carried this message to the wazir, who soon had the king's armies drawn up in battle order with the chiefs and notables of the kingdom at their head.

Meanwhile the king stayed to talk with the young prince, both because he was charmed with the excellence of his conversation, his beauty, and his manners; and also because he did not wish to leave him any longer alone with his daughter. As soon as dawn appeared the king returned to his palace and, sitting upon his throne, ordered his slaves to bring forth the finest horse from his stables for the prince, to saddle it magnificently, and deck it with all the honourable ornaments of war. Hearing this order, the prince exclaimed: "I wish no other horse than the one I came upon last night." "As you like," said the king; and he led the young man on to the polo-ground, where the troops were ranged for battle. While the prince was considering their number and quality, the king turned to them, crying: "O warriors, this man is come to ask me for my daughter's hand in marriage. I have never seen a more handsome or braver cavalier. He claims that he can put you all to rout with his single arm and that he would think little of you even if you were a hundred thousand times as many. When he charges you, do not scruple to receive him on your points, for that will teach him not to meddle in high matters." Then to the young man he said: "Be bold, my son, and let us see your prowess." "O king," answered the youth, "you do not treat me justly; how can I fight against all these horsemen

when I am on foot?" "I offered you a horse and you refused," said the king, "you can still choose one, if you have a mind." Then said Kamaralakmar: "None of your horses please me; I will only ride the one which brought me to your kingdom." "Where is it?" asked the king. "On top of your palace," answered the prince. "On top of my palace?" repeated the astonished sultan. "Yes, on the terrace," replied Kamaralakmar. The king looked at him closely, crying: "Extravagant boy, this is the best proof yet of your folly! How could there be a horse on the terrace? Yet I will send to see." Then, turning to the chief of his armies, he said: "Run to the palace and bring me back word of what you see there. Also fetch me anything you find on the terrace."

The people who were by marvelled at the prince's words and said to each other: "How could a horse possibly go up the stairs to the terrace? This is the most extraordinary thing we have ever heard!"

Meanwhile the king's messenger came to the palace and mounted to the terrace, where he beheld the finest horse that he had ever seen. Going up to look at it more closely, he found that it was made of ebony and ivory; then he and the soldiers he had brought with him burst out laughing and said one to the other:

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"As Allah lives, if this is the horse the young man

spoke of, he must be mad. Still it were better to get to the truth of the matter, for there may be more in it than meets the eye. The young man may be well-born and have some real merit." So saying, they lifted the wooden horse and, carrying it in their arms, set it down before the king. At once a crowd collected round it, admiring the beauty of its proportions and the richness of its decoration. The king turned in surprise to Kamaralakmar, saying: "O youth, is this your horse?" "It is," replied the prince, "and I will show you marvels with it." "Mount then!" cried the king; but the prince replied: "I will not mount until all these people have gone further back."

The king ordered all who were present to retire a bowshot from the horse. "Look well, O king!" cried Kamaralakmar, "I shall leap on my horse and charge your troops until they give way to right and left; I shall bring great trembling and fear upon them!" "Do what you wish," said the king. "Above all do not spare them, for they certainly will not spare you."

Immediately Kamaralakmar placed a light hand on the horse's neck and leapt upon its back.

Opposed to him the armies anxiously waited in close formation. Some said: "When he charges we will pick him up on our points and then drop him on our blades." But others said: "As Allah lives, it is a great pity! How can we have the heart to kill so elegant, tender, and handsome a youth?" And yet others said: "As Allah lives, we must have been mad to think that we could easily vanquish this young man. He would never have gone into such an adventure if he were not certain of succeeding! Whatever happens, he will have shown a high soul and great courage."

When Kamaralakmar felt himself firm in the saddle

he a little moved the rising peg, while all beheld him; at once the horse began to shake, quiver, pant, paw the ground, jig up and down, leap forward, advance, and retire; then, with elastic movements, it curvetted sideways with more fire and elegance than any horse in the stables of kings. Suddenly its flanks expanded with the wind and it darted straight up into the sky more quickly than an arrow, carrying its rider with it.

The king nearly fell to the ground in surprise and rage. He cried to his chief warriors: "Catch him, catch him, ill-omened ones! He is escaping!" But his wazirs and lieutenants answered: "O king, can a man catch a bird on the wing? This is not a man like other men but some magician or an Ifrit or a Marid of the air! Allah has delivered you from him, and saved us also! Let us thank the Highest who has granted salvation both to you and to the army!"

The king returned in the height of perplexity to his palace and told his daughter all that had passed on the polo-ground; hearing that the young prince had disappeared, the girl wept and despaired so bitterly that she fell seriously ill and lay upon her bed a prey to fever and black dreams. The king embraced and soothed her, clasping her to his breast and kissing her between the eyes, while he repeated the details of what had happened. "My daughter," he said, "you should rather thank and glorify Allah that He has delivered us from this sorcerer, this liar, this lecher, this robber, this pig." He might have spared his pains, for the princess would neither hear nor be comforted; instead she wept and sighed, saying: "As Allah lives, I will neither eat nor drink till He reunites me with my charming lover! Until then I shall remain buried in despair and have no art but weeping." Seeing that he could not persuade his daughter from her affliction,

the king beheld the world darken before his eyes and himself fell into a melancholy. So much for him and the Princess Shamsalnahar.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN PRINCE KAMARALAKMAR had risen in the air, he turned his horse's head towards his native land and, travelling easily, fell to dreaming of the beauty of the princess and revolving schemes for seeing her again. Although he had taken care to discover the name of the city, which was none other than Sana, the capital of Al-Yaman, his mind could hit upon no easy way of returning to it.

It seemed no time at all, thanks to the great speed of the horse and the intensity of his thoughts, before the prince came to his father's city. He made a great circle about it and then alighted on the terrace of the palace. Leaving the animal, he went down into the building, where the general appearance of grief and room after room strewn with ashes led him to believe that some member of the royal house was dead. He went into the king's private chamber and there found his father, mother, and sisters dressed in mourning, with yellow sunken cheeks and eyes laden with tears. His father leapt to his feet on beholding him and, having made certain that it was truly his son who had come back, uttered a great cry and fell into a swoon. When the old man came to his senses he threw himself into his son's arms and hugged him

with transports of excessive joy. His mother and sisters devoured him with their kisses and danced about him, the tears still wet upon their cheeks.

When they were a little calmed they asked what had happened to him and he told them the whole of his story from beginning to end; but it would be useless to repeat it in this place. Then cried his father: "Praise be to Allah for your safety, cool of my eyes, stone of my heart's fruit!" He gave great feasts of rejoicing to the people for seven whole days, distributing gold to the sound of fifes and cymbals, decorating the public ways, and throwing open the prisons and dungeons with a general pardon to all malefactors. Then, with his son riding by his side, he made procession through every quarter of the city, that the people might rejoice their eyes with a sight of the prince whom they had thought lost.

As soon as these rejoicings were finished, Kamaralakmar said to his father: "What has become of the Persian who gave you the horse?" "Allah confound the sage!" answered the king. "May He remove His blessings from him and curse the hour when my eyes first looked on him, for he was the cause of our separation from you. He lies in a dungeon, the sole prisoner in my kingdom whom I have not pardoned." At his son's entreaty the king then had the old man delivered from his prison and brought into his presence, where he pardoned him, gave him a robe of honour, and liberally heaped riches upon him. Nothing, however, was said of the princess, for the king was fully determined not to marry her to the Persian. On his side, the sage raged inwardly and bitterly repented his imprudence in letting the prince mount the magic horse; for this, as he understood, had led to the discovery of its secret.

The king could not set his mind at rest about the horse, so he said to his son: "I think it would be better, my child, if you never went near the wretched animal again, and above all never dreamed of getting on its back; for, as like as not, you do not know half the secrets of it and it certainly is not safe."

Kamaralakmar repeated to his father what had befallen with the king of Sana and his daughter and how he had escaped the resentment of that monarch. "My son," answered King Sabur, "if it was fated that he should kill you, he would have killed you; but your destined hour had not yet come."

During this while, the prince never for a moment forgot Shamsalnahar; through all the feasts and rejoicings with which his father continued to celebrate his return, she was always in his thoughts. One day the king, who was possessed of expert singers and lute players, ordered them to sing fair poems before him to the sound of their instruments. One among them took her lute and, bending over it as a mother over the babe at her breast, sang this song among others:

*Your memory will not be dying
For all the leagues between us twain,
For love will live though days be dying,
Though years be dead, and time be slain;
So in your love I would be dying
Or in your love would live again.*

When the prince heard these lines the fire of passion flamed up in his vitals, the embers of desire grew red within him, regret and sadness draped his soul with mourning, and love turned his heart over in his breast. He was not able to resist the feeling which drew him to the princess of Sana, so he rose from his

place and climbed on to the terrace where, in spite of his father's advice, he leapt upon the ebony horse and turned the peg. At once his steed rose with him like a bird into the air, making for the high regions of the sky.

On the following morning the king searched for him throughout the palace, and not finding him, went up to the terrace. As soon as he saw that the horse was gone, he bit the fingers of repentance that he had not hewn the invention in pieces, saying to himself: "As Allah lives, if my son returns again I will destroy the horse, for only so can my heart be free from alarms." With that he went down again into the palace and fell a second time to mourning and weeping.

Kamaralakmar continued his swift aerial flight and came at last to the city of Sana. Dismounting on the terrace of the palace, he went silently down the stairs and made towards the chamber of the princess. He again found the eunuch sleeping across the door and did not scruple to step over his body and tiptoe to the second door. Before raising the curtain he listened attentively and heard his beloved sobbing bitterly and saying over to herself sad verses, while her women tried to console her.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"DEAR MISTRESS," they were saying, "why do you

weep for one who certainly does not weep for you?" "What are you saying, O fools?" she answered, "Do you think the sweet youth I love and for whom I weep could ever forget me?" Then she wept so long and sorely that she swooned and the prince felt his heart break in pieces for her, his gall bladder like to burst inside his liver. Without delay he lifted the curtain and entered the room, where he found the young girl lying in her bed, covered only with her long hair and her fan of white feathers. As she took no note of his coming he went up to her and gently caressed her; at once she opened her eyes and saw him standing beside her, bent with an anxious air of questioning, and heard him murmur: "Why these tears?" Immediately new life came to her; she rose and threw herself all against him, winding her arms about his neck and covering his face with kisses. "For love of you and because you were gone from me, O light of my eyes!" she said. "And I," he answered, "have lived ever in desolation because of you." "I mourned for your absence," she whispered, "if you had stayed longer you would have found me dead." "Mistress," he said, "what think you of my treatment at your father's hands? As Allah lives, if it had not been for you, seduction of the earth and moon, temptation of heaven and hell, I would have cut his throat and made him a dead example for all living things; but as I love you, I love him also." "How could you find it in your heart to leave me?" she asked, "Did you think that there could be any sweetness in my life without you?" "Since you love me," he said, "will you hear me and follow my advice?" "You have only to speak," she answered, "and I will obey you." Then said he: "First let food and drink be brought, for I am hungry and thirsty; after that we will talk."

The princess ordered her maidens to bring meat and drink; and the two ate and drank together, exchanging sweet confidence until the night was nearly spent. When day threatened, Kamaralakmar rose to take leave of the girl before the eunuch should wake; but Shamsalnahar asked him where he was going. "To my father's house," he answered, "but I swear I will return to see you once every week." At this she burst into sobbing, and cried: "I beg you, in Allah's name, to take me with you and carry me where you will, rather than make me taste again the bitter apple of this separation!" "Are you really willing to come with me?" he asked joyfully; and she answered: "Yes." "Rise then and let us be off!" he cried, helping her to her feet. The princess opened a chest filled with splendid robes and riches of adornment and put upon herself all the most precious of the things she owned: collars, rings, bracelets, and a diversity of trinkets set with expensive gems. Then she went out with her beloved, none of her maidens daring to hinder her.

Kamaralakmar guided her to the terrace and, mounting his horse, took her up behind him, begging her to hold to him tightly. When he had fastened her to himself with strong swathings, he turned the peg and the horse rose with them into the air.

Seeing this ascent, the maidens uttered piercing cries which brought the king and queen out of their sleep and, half dressed, on to the terrace, where they were in time to see the magic horse rising on its airy journey with the prince and princess. In his desolation the king found strength to cry to the youth, as he mounted higher and higher: "O king's son, I conjure you to have compassion on myself and this old woman who is my queen. Do not take our daughter away

from us!" The prince did not answer; but the thought came suddenly to him that the young girl might perhaps regret to leave her father and mother in this way. Therefore he said to her: "Tell me, O splendour, O ravishment of this age and of my eyes, do you wish me to give you back to your father and mother?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"AS ALLAH LIVES, my master," she answered, "I only wish to be with you everywhere and in everything; for my love makes me forget all else, even my father and mother."

The prince rejoiced at this answer and sent his horse flying at its highest speed, which did not trouble the girl at all. Soon they had covered half their journey and came to earth for a short rest in a rich meadow watered by running streams. There they ate, drank and rested, and in a short while rose again on the magic horse and sped towards the capital of King Sabur. By morning they came safely within sight of the city, much to the prince's delight, who rejoiced beforehand at the thought of showing the princess his great possessions and proving to her the power and glory of his father, whom he could not but esteem to be richer and greater than the king of Sana. He brought the ebony horse to earth in the middle of a fair garden outside the city walls, where the king was

accustomed to come to take the air, and led the princess into a domed summer pavilion, which the king had built and furnished for himself. "I will leave you here for a short while and go to my father with an announcement of our coming," said the prince. "I have left the ebony horse at the door and I charge you to watch over it while I am away. Soon I will send you a messenger to bring you to your own palace, which I shall instantly have prepared for you." The girl understood from this that it was intended for her to enter the city with all the honours and attentions due to her rank; and her heart was beating high with pleasure when she bade the prince adieu.

King Sabur well-nigh died of joy when he saw the coming of his son: first he embraced him and then scolded him, with tears in his eyes, for having led them all down to the doors of the tomb by his departure. "Guess whom I have brought with me," said Kamaralakmar; and when his father cried: "As Allah lives, I cannot guess!" he continued: "I have brought the daughter of the king of Sana, the most accomplished lass in Persia and Arabia. I have left her in our garden outside the city and come forward to tell you, that you may prepare a grand procession to welcome her and give her a high idea of your power and greatness." "As it is to please you, I will do the thing gladly and richly, my son," answered the king; and at once he ordered the city to be decorated and the streets gaily ornamented for her coming. He arranged a procession of unexampled grandeur and, placing himself at the head of his brightly-armoured cavaliers, went out to meet Shamsalnahar, with banners flying, fifes playing, and drums beating, followed by a close mass of foot soldiers, citizens, women and children.

Prince Kamaralakmar opened up the coffers of his treasure and took from them his fairest jewels and greatest marvels, such as the sons of kings use to display their splendour. He prepared for his bride a vast canopy of red, green, and yellow brocade, beneath which was raised a gold throne starry with diamonds; under the dome of gilded silks which shadowed the throne, he ranged young Indian, Greek, and Abyssinian slaves, some seated, some standing, and had four other white slaves to walk by the throne bearing great fans of rare feathers. The canopy was carried on the shoulders of negroes, naked to the waist, in the train of the king's procession and moved on its way towards the garden through a dense press of people and women shrilling for joy.

Kamaralakmar could not stomach the delay of following the procession on foot; so, throwing himself on the back of one of his father's swiftest horses, he took a short cut and came in a minute or so to the pavilion where he had left the princess. To his horror he discovered that both she and the ebony horse had disappeared. In his despair he beat his face, tore his clothes, and ran like a madman through the gardens, crying and calling on his mistress.

When he became a little calmer and reason was returning to his mind, he said to himself: "How could she have known the secret mechanism of the horse, when I have told her nothing of it? Indeed it must be the Persian sage who has come upon her by accident and carried her off out of revenge."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE RAN to the guardians of the garden, saying: "Has anyone passed this way? Tell me the truth or your heads shall answer for it!" Terrified by his threat, the guardians answered with one voice: "As Allah lives, we have seen no one enter the garden except the Persian sage who came here to cull simples. He has not yet come out." When he knew for certain that it was the Persian who had stolen his beloved, the prince went back in grief and perplexity to meet the procession, and going up to his father, told him what had happened. "Take your troops and return with them to the palace," he said, "I will never return until I have got to the bottom of this black business." The king wept at his son's determination and said, beating his breast: "My child, have pity on me. Master your anger and grief, and return with me. Whatever king's daughter you desire, I will give you at once in marriage." Kamaralakmar paid no attention to his father's words; but, bidding him brief adieu, galloped off on his horse while the king returned weeping and groaning to the city. The joy of all his house was turned to sadness, to torture and consternation. So much for them.

As Destiny had decreed beforehand, the Persian sorcerer, when he came that day to the garden to pluck simples and aromatic herbs, smelt a delicious odour of musk and other admirable perfumes. Putting his nose to the wind he guided himself towards the sweet savour, which was none other than the charming scent of the princess which filled all the

garden as with balm. The old man's acute sense of smell led him in almost a straight line to the pavilion, at the door of which he found the magic horse, the work of his hands. It would be impossible to tell the joy which filled his heart when he knew for certain that he had recovered his masterpiece, whose loss had taken away his appetite for food and drink and sleep. Finding the mechanism intact and in good working order, he was about to leap on the horse's back and fly away, when it occurred to him to find out whom the prince had brought with him and left in charge of the animal. He stepped into the pavilion and saw what he took to be the rising sun in a quiet sky; this was the princess, lying at ease upon a couch. As soon as he beheld her, he realised that she must be of noble birth and that the prince had only left her in the pavilion while he went to prepare a splendid welcome for her. Therefore he came forward and kissed the earth between her hands while she slowly raised her eyes and then quickly shut them, to escape the sight of so much horrible ugliness. "Who are you?" she asked; and he answered: "Mistress, I am the messenger sent by Prince Kamaralakmar to lead you to another pavilion, finer than this and nearer to the city. The queen, my mistress, the prince's mother, is a little unwell today and she therefore wishes you to be nearer to her that she may be the first to welcome you, but without too much fatigue to herself." "But where is the prince?" asked Shamsalnaha. "He is with the king in the city," answered the Persian, "soon he will come to meet you with a grand procession." "Tell me," she said, "could not the prince find some messenger a trifle less ugly than yourself?" Although he was deeply mortified at this question, the old man smiled with all the wrinkles of his yellow

face, and answered: "As Allah lives, my mistress, there is no more hideous mameluke in the palace than myself; but the abominable plainness of my face must not lead you astray as to my value. One day you will put my capacity to the proof as the prince has done, and then you will praise me. I think the prince chose me as his messenger because of this very hideousness of mine, so that he might have no cause for jealousy; for, believe me, the palace lacks not mamelukes nor young slaves nor handsome negroes nor enticing eunuchs. Thanks be to Allah, there is no numbering them; and each is more seductive than the others."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THESE WORDS PERSUADED the princess, so that she rose and gave her hand to the old wizard, saying: "My father, what have you brought to carry me?" "Mistress," he replied, "you shall mount the horse on which you came." "Oh, I could never ride on it alone," she cried; and the sage smiled for he knew that he had her in his power. "I will ride with you!" he exclaimed, and leaping into the saddle took up the girl behind him. When he had securely fastened her, all unsuspecting, to his waist, he turned the peg and the horse filled its belly with wind and began to leap to and fro like the waves of the sea. Soon it rose like a bird and, in a moment, the city and the garden were left far behind.

"What are you doing?" cried the girl. "Why do

you not obey your master's orders?" "My master? Who is my master?" he asked. "The king's son!" she cried; but when he demanded of her what king, she could only answer: "I do not know." The Persian burst out laughing and said: "If you are talking of young Kamaralakmar, whom may Allah confound, it is a poor lad, a stupid lubber." "Woe upon you, bearded of ill omen!" she cried. "How dare you speak so ill of your master?" "I tell you, the youth is not my master! Do you know who I am?" retorted the sorcerer. "I know nothing of you except what you have told me yourself," answered the princess. Then said he with a smile: "All that I told you was but a net for the feet of you and the prince. That young blackguard stole my horse from me, the work of my hands, so that I wept and burnt my heart for it. Now I have become master again of my own and it is his turn to weep and burn the heart. Pluck up your courage, dry and refresh your eyes, for I shall be a greater profit to you than that young idiot. I am generous, powerful, and rich; my servants and slaves will obey you as they obey me; I will dress and jewel you beyond kings and satisfy your least desire before you have spoken it."

Shamsalnahar beat her face and sobbed: "O my torture!" she cried. "I shall lose my beloved, as I have lost my father and mother!" Her tears fell bitterly, because of her evil state, while the Persian headed his horse towards the land of Roum. After a journey for weary hours at the speed of light, he brought the horse to earth in a green meadow of that country, bright with trees and diversified with water-courses.

Now this meadow lay near the city over which ruled

a very powerful king; and, on that same day, the king had come forth to breathe the country air and walk there. Seeing the old man with a horse and a young girl beside him, he sent his slaves, who quickly threw themselves upon the Persian and brought him, with his two possessions, into the presence of the king.

The sultan was astonished at the old man's disgusting ugliness and the ravishing beauty of the girl. "O mistress, what sort of a cruel family is yours to have married you to so old and hideous a man?" he asked. "She is my cousin and my wife," the Persian hastened to answer; but the princess gave him the lie, saying: "O king, as Allah lives I hardly know this evil-looking ancient; so far from being my husband, he is a wicked sorcerer who has carried me off by fraud and force."

When he heard this the king of Roum ordered his slaves to beat the old man; and they obeyed so heartily that he nearly died under their blows. Then the king had him taken to the city and thrown into a dungeon, while he brought the girl and the ebony horse, the qualities of which he was far from suspecting, to his own palace. So much for the Persian and the princess.

Prince Kamaralakmar dressed himself in travelling clothes and taking a provision of food and money set out to search for the princess with a very heavy heart. As he passed through land after land and city after city he asked the news of an ebony horse, so that those he questioned were astonished by what he said and considered him altogether extravagant.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FOR WEARY MONTHS he went on his way, searching and questioning more and more diligently, without hearing any news of those he sought. He came to the city of Sana, where ruled the father of Shamsalnahar but none there could give him news of the princess and could only add to his despair by telling of the sorry state into which their king had fallen. He continued his journey, making by chance towards the land of Roum, and asking of every wayfarer and at every halt if anything had been seen of a princess and an ebony horse.

One day he stopped at a khan where a circle of merchants were talking with each other; as he sat down beside them he heard one of them say: "My friends, I recently came across a prodigy, the like of which you have never heard." When the others asked him what that might be, the man continued: "I took my goods to such and such a city and heard the inhabitants talking of a strange thing. It appears the king of that place had gone out hunting and had found a very disgusting old man in his territory, standing beside a girl of incomparable beauty and a horse made entirely of ebony and ivory." The merchant went on to tell all that had happened in that city, but it would be useless to repeat it here.

Kamaralakmar did not doubt for a moment that he had found what he was seeking; so, after having made himself acquainted with the name and direction of the city, he made all speed towards it. When he would

have entered the gates, the guards took him in custody in order to lead him before their king that he might be questioned according to the custom of the country. As it was already late, the guards postponed the youth's introduction until the following morning and, in the meanwhile, led him to prison that he might spend the night there. But when the gaolers found how handsome and well-mannered he was, they could not find it in their hearts to lock him up; instead, they begged him to sit among them and share their repast. They began to talk among themselves after they had eaten and one of them said to the prince: "From what country do you come, O youth?" "I come from Persia," he answered; and all the gaolers burst out laughing. Said one of them: "O Persian, I wonder if you are as great a liar as your countryman who is shut up in the dungeon?" Said another: "In truth I have seen many peoples and heard their talk and the tales they tell, but I have never met such an extravagant old fool as the one we have here!" "As Allah lives," added another, "I have never seen anyone so disgustingly plain in all my life!" "What are his lies?" asked the prince; and they answered: "He pretends that he is a sage and an illustrious doctor. Our king found him when he was out hunting, standing beside a young girl and a marvellous horse of ebony and ivory. The king was much taken with the girl's beauty and would have married her, if she had not suddenly gone mad. Had the old man been the great doctor he claims to be, it would have been worth his while to cure her, for the king has left no stone unturned to make her well, and has in vain spent immense sums of money on physicians and astrologers. The ebony horse is shut in among the

king's treasures and the ugly old man is here in prison, where he groans and moans all night so that we cannot sleep."

"At last I am in a fair way," said Kamaralakmar to himself. "I must form some plan." When the hour for sleep arrived, the gaolers led him into the interior of the prison and locked the door upon him. At once he heard the sage weeping and crying in the Persian tongue: "Alas, alas, that I did not hatch a better scheme! Now I am lost, without having once satisfied myself upon the girl. Alas, alas, for my ambition and lack of judgment!" Kamaralakmar spoke to him in Persian, saying: "Whence these tears and lamentations? Do you think that you are the only unfortunate in the world?" Encouraged by these words, the old man entered into conversation and without recognising him in the least, poured into the prince's ears the story of his failure. The two passed the night together in speech, as if they had been friends.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-twenty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING the gaolers took Kamaralakmar from his prison and led him before the king, saying: "This young man came to the city late last evening so that we were not then able to bring him into the king's presence to be questioned." Then said the king: "Whence come you? What is your name? What is

your trade? And why have you visited my kingdom?" "My name is Harjah in the Persian tongue," answered the prince, "Persia is my country, and my profession is that of a wise doctor, especially skilled in curing those who are mad or deranged. I journey through lands and cities to exercise my art and to add to the knowledge which I have already. I practice without the ordinary accoutrement of astrologers and sages. I do not enlarge my turban or increase the number of its folds, I do not prolong my sleeves, I do not carry a great weight of books under my arm, I do not stain my lids with black kohl, I do not carry round my neck a chaplet of a thousand beads; I cure without mysterious mutterings, I do not blow in my patients' faces or bite the lobes of their ears. Such am I, O king."

"O excellent doctor," exclaimed the joyful monarch, "you come when we have most need of your services!" He told the prince the story of the young girl's sufferings, and added: "If you can cure her of the madness into which the evil Jinn have thrown her, you have but to ask of me and all your desires shall be granted." "Allah rain graces and favours on the king!" answered Kamaralakmar. "First you must tell me all the details you have noticed of this madness, with the time of its endurance and every particular which you can remember of the girl, the old Persian, and the ebony horse." At once the king told him the whole story from beginning to end, adding: "As for the old man, I have thrown him into a dungeon." "And the horse?" asked the prince. "It is carefully guarded in one of my pavilions," answered the king. Then said Kamaralakmar to himself: "Before everything I must see the horse again. If I find it intact, my object is gained; but if anything has gone

wrong with the mechanism I must think of some other way to save my beloved." Turning to the king he said aloud: "I must first see the horse, for it is likely that, by examining it, I may find something which will help me with the cure." "Certainly," said the king; and at once led Kamaralakmar to the place where the horse had been deposited. The prince examined it carefully, looking all round, and found, to his great joy, that it was in working order. "Allah favour and exalt the king!" he cried. "I am now ready to see the girl and diagnose her trouble. I hope, under Allah's favour, to cure her by my skill, working in co-operation with this wooden horse." So saying, he recommended the guards to give particular attention to their charge and followed the king to the princess's apartment.

He found her twisting her hands and beating her breasts and tearing her clothes to ribbons as was her custom. He saw at once that her madness was only feigned and that neither man nor spirit had practised upon her reason. Also he understood that she had had recourse to this trick to keep all folk away from her.

Kamaralakmar went towards her, saying: "Enchantress of the three worlds, may all trouble and torment sit far off from you!" When he addressed her she looked at him and, in the great joy of her recognition, uttered a loud cry and fainted away. The king took this seizure to be the result of her fear of the doctor, but Kamaralakmar, having brought her to herself, leaned over her, saying in a whisper: "O Shamsalnahar, O black of my eye, O stone of my heart's fruit, have a care for your life and mine! Be bold and patient for a little longer; our case requires infinite precaution and great prudence if we would

win from the hands of this tyrannical king. First I am going to confirm his belief that you are possessed by a Jinni and that your madness comes from that; then I will assure him that my occult virtue can instantly cure you. This you must prove by talking calmly to him." "I hear and I obey!" answered the princess.

The young prince went up to the king, who stood at the further end of the chamber, and said to him, with a hopeful face: "O auspicious king, thanks to the excellent destiny which follows you, I can both diagnose and cure this folly; indeed I have done so already. Go up to the girl and speak with her kindly; promise her all you have in your mind to promise, and things shall go as you wish." Greatly marvelling the king went up to Shamsalnahar, who at once rose and kissed the earth between his hands, wishing him welcome and saying: "Your servant is confused by the honour of this visit."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING SO GREAT a change in her, the king nearly swooned for joy; he ordered his servants, his women slaves, and his eunuchs, to put themselves at her disposition, to lead her to the hammam and to prepare rich robes and ornaments for her. The women bowed before her and she returned their salute sweetly and gently. Then they habited her in royal robes, hung a

collar of diamonds about her neck and led her to the hammam, where they bathed and served her until she appeared like a moon of the fourteenth night.

With heart and soul at ease, the king said to the young prince: "O sage, O learned doctor, O skilled philosopher, our present great happiness is due entirely to your merit. May Allah increase His blessings upon your healing breath!" "O king," answered Kamaralakmar, "to put a crown upon the cure it is necessary for you to go out with all your train of soldiers and courtiers to the place where you found the girl, taking with you my patient and the ebony horse; for the horse is no other than a Jinni who has possessed the girl and made her mad. I will make the necessary exorcisms in that place, for otherwise the Jinni will re-enter into possession of her at the beginning of each month and all the cure will be to do again. Once I have made myself his master, I will prison and kill him." "I will certainly do as you say!" cried the king of Roum; and at once, accompanied by the prince and the young girl and all his following, he left the city for the meadow.

When all had arrived, Kamaralakmar ordered the girl to be mounted upon the ebony horse and both to be placed far enough off not to be clearly seen by the king and his people. As soon as this had been carried out to his satisfaction, he said: "Now, with the permission and good will of the king, I will begin my fumigation and conjuring, so that I may catch this enemy of life and render him powerless to do further evil. I will myself mount upon the ebony-seeming horse and place the girl behind me; soon you will see the animal tremble and move and struggle; after which it will gallop towards you and stop between your hands. That will be proof that we have

him altogether in our power. After that you can do as you wish with the girl."

Leaving the king of Roum in joyful anticipation, Kamaralakmar mounted the horse and fastened the princess securely behind him. Under the gaze of all eyes, he turned the peg and the horse rose straight up into the air and disappeared.

For a long time the king had no suspicion; but stayed with his people in the meadow, waiting half the day for the return of the two. As they did not come back he decided to wait in his own palace; when hours had passed there without result, he called to mind the ugly old man whom he had imprisoned. At once he had him brought into his presence, and cried: "O traitor, ape's bottom, how dared you hide from me the mystery of that spell-bound horse and its possession by the Jinni? Now, alas, it has flown up into the air with the doctor who cured the girl of her madness and the girl herself. Who knows what will happen to them? I hold you responsible for the jewels and valuable treasure with which I ornamented the child when she came from the hammam; therefore your head must part from your body even now." At a sign from the king the executioner advanced and, with a single turn of his wrist, made two Persians out of one Persian. So much for the people in Roum.

Prince Kamaralakmar and Princess Shamsalnahar made their swift flight in all tranquillity and came safely to the capital of King Sabur. This time they would have none of the pavilion in the garden but came to rest on the terrace of the palace. The prince bestowed his beloved in a sure place and ran to tell his father and mother of the safe return. Going into the chamber where the king, the queen, and the three princesses remained plunged in despairing tears, he

threw himself into their arms and wished them peace. At once the heavy weights of affliction fell from their hearts and they rejoiced.

To celebrate the return of his prince and the coming of the daughter of the king of Sana, Sabur gave long feasts to all the people of his city and the rejoicing lasted for a whole month. Kamaralakmar entered into the marriage chamber and joyed with the young girl during long nights of blessedness.

King Sabur assured the future tranquillity of his heart by breaking the ebony horse in pieces and destroying its mechanism with his own hands.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KAMARALAKMAR wrote a letter to the king of Sana, his father-in-law, in which he told him the whole story of his adventures and announced the marriage and perfect happiness of the two concerned in them. The messenger who took this letter was accompanied by slaves bearing magnificent presents of rarity and price. When the king of Sana in Al-Yaman had read the letter, he rejoiced exceedingly and accepted the gifts; also by the same messenger, he sent back valuable presents to his son-in-law. This relenting especially pleased the handsome prince, for he had been sad to think that the old king might disapprove of his conduct. He made it a rule to send a fresh letter and further presents every year, until the king of Sana

died. His own father, King Sabur, passed in his turn to the mercy of Allah and Kamaralakmar began his reign by marrying his youngest and favourite sister to the new king of Al-Yaman.

King Kamaralakmar governed wisely and justly, and by these means gained supremacy not only over far lands, but over the hearts of the people who dwelt in them. He and his wife Shamsalnahar lived the most tranquil and delightful of lives together, until there came to them the Destroyer of sweetness, the Separator of friends, the Plunderer of palace and cot, the Builder of tombs, and the Enricher of graveyards.

Now glory to the Only Living, who does not die and who holds in His hands the dominion of the Visible and Invisible world!

When Shahrazade, the wazir's daughter, had finished this story, she fell silent. Then said King Shahryar: "This is a prodigious tale, Shahrazade. I would give a great deal to understand the extraordinary mechanism of that ebony horse." "Alas, it was destroyed," said Shahrazade. "As Allah lives, my soul is tormented to think of it!" exclaimed Shahryar; and Shahrazade answered: "Then I am ready, O auspicious king, if you will allow me, to calm the trouble of your mind with the most entertaining tale I know, in which you shall hear of Dalila-the-Wily and her daughter Zaynab-the-Cheat." "As Allah lives," cried King Shahryar, "you may tell me that tale, for I do not know it! When it is finished I will decide about your head."

So Shahrazade told:

THE TALE OF THE SHIFTS OF DALILA-
THE-WILY AND HER DAUGHTER ZAYNAB-
THE-CHEAT WITH AHMAD-THE-MOTH,
HASSAN-THE-PEST, AND ALI QUICKSILVER

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was in Baghdad, during the reign of the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, a man called Ahmad-the-Moth and another known as Hassan-the-Pest. Both were so famous for their prodigious mastery in theft and fraud that the khalifat who could draw advantage from every sort of talent, called them to him and appointed them the chiefs of his police. He gave each a robe of honour, a salary of a thousand golden dinars every month, and a guard of forty horsemen; at the same time putting the safety of the city on land in charge of Ahmad-the-Moth and intrusting its safety by water to Hassan-the-Pest. The two walked ever at the khalifat's side, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

On the day of their nomination they went forth with the emir Kalid, wali of Baghdad, and rode in procession, followed by their forty guards and preceded by a herald who cried this decree of the khalifat: "By order of the king, O all you people of Baghdad! Know that the chief of police upon our right hand is Ahmad-the-Moth and the chief of police upon our left hand is Hassan-the-Pest. See to it that your obedience and respect are ever at their call!"

At that time there lived in Baghdad a redoubtable old woman called Dalila, and known commonly as Dalila-the-Wily. She had two daughters, one married and the mother of a little piece named Mahmud Mis-carriage, the other unmarried and famous under the

name of Zaynab-the-Cheat. Old Dalila's husband had been a great man in his time, the director of carrier pigeons for the whole empire, who, for his important services, was dearer to the khalifat than his own children. He had had honours and precedence, with a monthly wage of a thousand dinars; but now he was dead and forgotten, and the old woman was left upon the world with her two daughters. Dalila had grown old in the art of theft, trickery, and clever devices; she could have over-reached a snake and left it bare, or taught the devil useful lessons in deceit.

On the day when the two new chiefs of police were invested with their office, young Zaynab heard the herald, and said to her mother: "You remember that fellow Ahmad-the-Moth who came here to Baghdad as an outlaw from Egypt? Well, he has shown such high criminal expedients since he came that his fame has gone abroad even to the ears of the khalifat and Haroun Al-Rachid has made him chief of police on his right hand. The other chief of police is Hassan-the-Pest, that bald and scabby man. Each has a cloth laid day and night in the palace, a body-guard, a monthly thousand dinars, and every sort of honour; while we stay unemployed and forgotten in our own house, without any caring what comes to us." "As Allah lives, my daughter, that is so," said old Dalila with a shake of her head. "Mother," continued Zaynab, "I beg you rise up now and find some really evil device or notable fraud which will make us famous and cause the khalifat to give us back the appointments and prerogatives of our father."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“BY THE LIFE of my head,” answered Dalila, “I promise you, my dear, that I will play such first-class tricks in Baghdad that those of both Ahmad-the-Moth and Hassan-the-Pest will be forgotten!” To make good her boast, she at once set about the following preparations: she covered her face with a lisam-veil, dressed herself in a Sufi’s mantle, the sleeves of which swept the ground, and circled her waist with a large linen girdle; then she filled a ewer to the neck with water, placed three dinars in the mouth of it and pressed down a plug of palm fibre on top; she put about her shoulders and breast several chaplets of beads, as heavy as a load of firewood, and took in her hand the flag of a Sufi beggar, made with strips of red, yellow and green material. Thus disguised she went out of the house, crying: “Allah, Allah!” in a loud voice and praying with her tongue, while her heart galloped along the road of devils and her mind revolved notable and perverse expedients.

She passed through several parts of the city until she came to a blind alley paved with marble and carefully swept and watered, at the foot of which rose a great door, corniced with alabaster and guarded by a well-dressed Moorish slave. This door was made of sandal wood ornamented with bronze rings and having locks of silver, as befitted the owner of the house, who was none other than the chief of the khalifat’s guard, a man rich, respected and heavily paid for his duties. This man, who was both violent and ill-mannered, was known as Mustapha, the Street Scourge,

because with him blows came first and words second. He had married a delightful girl and had sworn to her, out of his great love, on the night of the first consummation, never to take a second wife while she was alive and never to sleep away from home. At about this time, however, Mustapha the Street Scourge had noticed that each emir who went with him to the diwan had one or more sons; also, on the day of which I am speaking, he had looked in the hammam mirror and seen that the white hairs in his beard greatly outnumbered the black. Therefore he asked himself: "Shall He who has taken away my father not send me a son?" When he went again into his wife's presence, he sat down on the couch in a very bad humour without giving her a single look or word, but as soon as she approached and wished him a good evening, he exclaimed: "Get out of my sight! The day I saw you first I saw nothing good." "How is that?" she asked; and he went on: "The night of my wedding, you made me swear not to take another wife; today at the diwan I saw each emir bringing with him one son or two, and the thought of death came to me. My heart is sore that I have not been given a son or even a daughter; for he who leaves no posterity, leaves no name. That is why I am angry, O barren fool, O stony valley who has wasted all my seed!" The girl blushed as she retorted: "As Allah lives, it hardly becomes you to talk, the thing is not my fault: I have worn out whole mortars in pounding spices, triturating herbs, and powdering roots against sterility. I tell you the lack is with you; you are a sapless mule with a flat nose, your body is filled with water and dead seeds." "Very well," he answered, "when I return I will marry another wife." "My fate is in the hands of Allah!" she cried after him as he left the

house; but she would have recalled her hardy words as soon as he had departed; and, he, on his side, regretted their quarrel as soon as he was in the street. Now you know something of the owner of the house in the blind alley.

When Dalila-the-Wily had come under the walls of the house she saw the emir's young wife sitting at her window, seeming a new-married bride because of the great treasure of jewels which she wore and shining like a dome of crystal in her white expensive clothes. "O Dalila," said the old woman to herself, "now is the time to open the sack of your inventions. Let us see if you cannot entice this girl from the house and strip her of all those jewels and lovely clothes." Upon this thought she halted under the window and began to call on the name of Allah in a loud voice, saying: "Allah! Allah! and you, O walis, friends of God, make clear my path!" As soon as they saw this holy old woman dressed as a mendicant Sufi and heard her invocations, all the women of that quarter ran to kiss the skirts of her mantle and to demand a blessing. "Perhaps," thought the emir's wife, "Allah will send me His grace through this holy mother." She called her servant to her and said with shining eyes: "Go down to our door-keeper, Abu Ali, and kiss his hands, saying: 'My mistress Khatun begs you to allow the holy woman to come up to her, that we may obtain the blessing of Allah.'"

The servant ran down and kissed the porter's hands, saying: "O Abu Ali, my mistress Khatun begs you to allow the holy woman to come up to her, that we may obtain the blessing of Allah. It is likely that all of us will receive the benefit of her benediction." The porter went up to the old woman and would have kissed her hands, but she started back,

exclaiming: "Away, away! You say your prayers without ablution, as do all servants, and your impure touch would make my cleanliness of no avail. I pray that Allah may deliver you from this slavery, O Abu Ali, the door-keeper, for you are in the good graces of His saints." This wish touched Abu Ali to the heart, for there was three months' pay owing to him from the terrible emir, Mustapha the Street Scourge, and his mind misdoubted him about the payment. "O mother," said he, "let me drink a little from your ewer, that your blessing may flow with the water." She took the ewer from her shoulder and shook it in the air so that the plug of palm fibre fell out and the three golden dinars rolled on the ground, as if they had been cast from heaven. The porter hastened to pick them up, saying to himself: "Glory be to Allah! This old beggar is a saint of saints and has all the hidden treasures of God at her disposition. It has been revealed to her that I have wages owing to me and am hard pressed for money; therefore, by her holiness she has called these three dinars from the hollow air." Stretching out the coins to the old woman, he said aloud: "Take these three dinars, good aunt, for perhaps they fell out of your ewer." "What have I to do with money?" she answered, "I do not occupy myself with things of this world. Keep the coins, for they will better your circumstances and replace what your master owes you." "Glory be to Allah for His help!" said the porter, raising his arms on high. "This is nothing less than revelation!"

As soon as this scene was over the slave girl kissed Dalila's hand and led her into the presence of her mistress.

The old woman was astounded by the beauty of her hostess; and indeed the child looked like a naked

treasure whose guardian seal had been loosed to make her visible.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE BEAUTIFUL KHATUN threw herself at the old woman's feet and kissed her hands. "My child," said Dalila, "I came because Allah inspired me with the thought that you had need of my counsels." Khatun at once brought food, according to the hospitality which is usually given to holy beggars; but the old woman refused to eat, saying: "I have no gusto for any but the meats of Paradise; therefore I fast always, except on five days in the year. Now, my child, I see that you are in trouble and am very anxious that you should tell me about it." "Good mother," answered the girl, "on the day of our marriage I made my husband swear never to take a second wife; but now he sees the sons of others and, wishing for one himself, has called me barren. I answered that he was a sapless mule and he went out in anger, swearing to marry again when he returned; I fear that he will take a second wife and that she will bear him children; for he is rich in houses and lands, allowances and villages, and, if he has offspring by another, I shall be cheated out of all these goods." "My daughter," said the old woman, "it is well seen that you know nothing of the virtues of my lord, the sheikh Father-of-Thrusts, the powerful

Master-of-Bangs, the holy Multiplier-of-Pregnancies. A single visit to this saint turns a poor debtor into a rich creditor and a barren woman into a fruitful barn." "Mother," replied the fair Khatun, "I have not once been out of the house since I married, not even for visits of congratulation or condolence." Then said the old woman: "I will take you to my lord the Father-of-Thrusts, the Multiplier-of-Pregnancies, and you must not fear to tell him all your trouble. When you return your husband will lie with you and in consequence make you most certainly with child. Whether it be male or female you must consecrate it to the service of the Master-of-Bangs."

Khatun, all on fire with hope, hastened to put on her fairest robes and richest jewels; then, recommending the house to the care of her servant, she went down to the door with Dalila. When the old Moorish porter asked her whither she would go, she answered: "I am going to visit the sheikh Multiplier-of-Pregnancies." Then said the porter: "My mistress, this holy old woman is a blessing straight from Allah. She has His treasures in her keeping. Not only did she tell my difficulty without my having spoken of it, but she gave me three holy blessed dinars of red gold. May the virtue of her yearly fast be a little upon my head!"

As the two set off, Dalila said to Khatun: "As Allah lives, dear mistress, I trust that when you visit the Father-of-Thrusts he will not only be able to calm your spirit, satisfy your wish, and bring back your husband's love, but also that he will contrive that there shall never more be quarrel or high words between you." "O mother," answered the emir's wife "already I long to see that holy old man!"

As they went, Dalila-the-Wily was saying to her-

self: "How can I steal the jewels and strip this young fool in such a crowd?" Suddenly she said aloud: "It will be better if you walk far behind me, keeping me carefully in sight, for I am an old woman rudely burdened with the loads of others and, all along the street, people meet me with pious offers for my lord, and gifts which I must carry. For the moment, then, I had better walk alone." The girl did as she was bid and presently the two arrived in this order at the principal market, which echoed with the golden clinking of the bracelets about Khatun's delicate feet, and the cadenced tinkling of the sequins in her hair, as if to well-played music.

As they passed the shop of one Sidi Mohsin, that handsome scarce-bearded young merchant remarked the girl's beauty and sent her sideways glances which the old woman was not slow to interpret. She returned to the girl, saying: "Sit down and rest a little, my daughter, while I speak with this young merchant on a matter of business." Khatun sat down near the shop, bestowing one glance upon the youth which came nigh to maddening him. When he was thus, as it were, cooked to a turn, the old woman bowed before him, saying: "Are you not Sidi Mohsin, the merchant?" "I am," he answered, "but who told you my name?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"GOOD FOLK HAVE sent me to you," she answered.

"That girl whom you see is my daughter. Her father, who was a great merchant, died and left her well off. She has left the house today for the first time, for she has only just become marriageable, as I know by certain unequivocal signs. I hastened to bring her forth, acting on the advice of the wise, who say: 'Offer your daughter soon and your son late.' Divine inspiration and a presentiment lead me to offer her to you in marriage. You need have no anxiety in the matter; for, if you are poor, I will give you all her money and you can open two shops in the place of one. Thus Allah will have gifted you not only with a charming girl, but also with three desirable things beginning in C: cash, comfort, and conquest."

"Mother," answered Sidi Mohsin, "this is excellent and more than I could wish. I thank you from the bottom of my heart and have no sort of doubt about the first two C's. As regards the third C, I must confess that I will not be reassured until I have seen the territory for myself; for my mother, before she died, said earnestly to me: 'My son, I wish I could have married you to some young girl whom I had examined for myself.' I swore to her that I would carry out this business on my own account, and she died with a quiet mind." "In that case, rise up and follow me," said the old woman, "I take it upon myself to show her to you quite naked, if you will walk far behind her and be guided by the way I take."

The young merchant rose and took up a purse containing a thousand dinars, saying to himself: "One never knows what will happen; it will be as well to have the money for the contract with me." Then he followed the old whore, who had already gone forward thinking to herself: "Now, wise Dalila, how are you going to pillage this young calf?"

As she walked on, followed in order by the girl and the young man, her eyes fell upon the shop of a dyer called Hajj Muhamad, a man famous in all the market for the dual direction of his tastes. He was like the knife of one who sells kolocasia, which cuts through male and female alike; equally he loved the tender fig and the acid pomegranate. Hajj Muhamad lifted his eyes when he heard the clicking of anklets and, seeing the boy and girl, strongly felt that which he felt. As he was gazing, Dalila came up and said with a bow: "Surely you are Hajj Muhamad, the dyer?" "I am," he answered, "what do you want?" "Folk have spoken well of you to me," she replied, "Now look at these, my son and daughter, two charming young people whose education has cost me a pretty penny. . . . The house where they live with me is great but very old, so that of late I have had to strengthen it with wooden joists and props. Now the master builder has said that I risk being crushed if I go on living there until the place has been rebuilt. I am therefore on the look-out for some other house where I can live for the time being with these two children. I was recommended to come to you and now I beg that you will, of your generosity, allow us to stay in your house until the repairs are finished."

The dyer felt his heart dancing among his entrails at this speech. "O Hajj Muhamad," he said to himself, "here's butter on a biscuit for your old teeth!" Then aloud to Dalila he continued: "It is true that I have a house with a very large chamber on the top storey; but although I live below, I have no other place than that to receive my guests in, the peasants who bring me indigo." "My son," exclaimed the old woman, "we only wish lodging for a month or two and we know no one in this city. I beg you to divide

your upper chamber into two and let the three of us live in one-half of it. As Allah lives, your guests, the indigo planters, can be our guests and welcome at that. We are ready to eat with them and sleep with them." Being reassured on this point, the dyer gave her the three keys of his house, saying: "The big one is for the front door, the little for the vestibule, and the twisted for the upper chamber. I give you the use of all, good mother." With profuse thanks, Dalila took the keys and went forward, followed as before by the girl and the young merchant, and, coming at length to the street in which the dyer's house was situated, hastened to open the door with the large key.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE WENT IN first herself, signing to the young man to wait, and then led Khatun to the upper chamber, saying: "My daughter, on the ground floor dwells the venerable Father-of-Thrusts. Take off your great veil and wait for me here. I will not be long." She hurried down and, opening to the young merchant, introduced him into the vestibule, saying: "Sit down here and wait till I bring my daughter to you; for I wish you to judge about the third C with your own eyes." Then she ran up to Khatun and said: "We will now visit the Father-of-Thrusts." "What joy, my mother!" she cried; but the old woman continued: "My daughter, I fear for one thing; I have an idiot

son below who is the representative and helper of the old man. He knows not heat from cold and is always naked. When some noble lady like yourself comes to visit my lord the sight of her silks and ornaments sends him into a fury, he throws himself upon her and tears her robes to pieces, scattering her jewels and wrenching her earrings from her ears. I think you had better take off your jewels and all your garments here; I will look after them for you until you return from the holy man." At once the girl took off all her jewels and every garment except a light silk chemise. She gave all these things to Dalila, who said: "I will go and place them under the holy man's robe that they may acquire virtue." She left the chamber and, after hiding the rich packet under the stairs, went down to the young merchant who was impatiently awaiting her. When he asked her where her daughter was, she began to beat her breast and face in silence. "What is the matter?" asked the young man, and she answered: "May the devil smite all envious and evil speaking neighbours. They saw you come in with me and, when I told them that you were to be my daughter's husband, they took the girl aside and said to her, doubtless out of jealousy: 'Is your mother so tired of maintaining you that she is ready to marry you to a man with the itch and the leprosy?' What could I do but swear to her, even as you swore to your mother, that she should not marry until she had seen you naked?" "I call to Allah to witness against these evil-minded slanderers!" cried the young man; and without more ado he hurried off all his clothes and stood up naked, white and spotless like virgin silver. "You are as pure as you are beautiful; there is nothing to fear," said Dalila-the-Wily; and then, as he was beginning to fold together his rich

marten cloak, his belt, his silver and gold dagger and his purse, to one side of the room, she prevented him, saying: "You must not leave these tempting things in the vestibule; I will put them in a place of safety for you." She made all his belongings into a bundle and, locking the door on the youth with a promise of speedy return, took the other packet from under the stairs and noiselessly left the house.

As soon as she gained the street, she put her rich takings in the care of a spice merchant of her acquaintance and made for the shop of the libidinous dyer at her best speed. "Well, my aunt," he cried as soon as he saw her, "I hope that the house suits you?" "It is a blessed house," she answered, "and I am more satisfied with it than I can say. Now I am going to hire some porters to carry in our belongings; as I shall be occupied some little time in this, I beg you to take this dinar and buy some bread-soup and hashed meat for my children, who have not eaten since this morning. Take the food with you and have your meal with them, if you will be so good." "Who will look after my shop and my client's goods?" objected the dyer. "Your little apprentice," she said. Then said he: "Be it so," and without loss of time, he took a plate and bowl and went out to buy the bread-soup. So much for the dyer; we will soon return to him.

Dalila-the-Wily retrieved her two bundles from the spice merchant and, returning to the dyer's shop, said to the apprentice: "Your master wishes you to run at once and meet him at the bread-soup sellers." "I hear and I obey!" answered the lad, as he hurried from the shop. Before he was out of sight, the old woman began to gather together all the portable goods in the place. While she was thus employed she saw a

donkey-boy passing the shop with his ass. For a week he had been out of work and he was also a hashish eater. "Ho, donkey-boy!" cried the old harlot. The man stopped at the door and Dalila said to him: "Do you know my son, the dyer?" "As Allah lives," he answered, "no one knows him better than I do, mistress."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID DALILA-THE-WILY: "Know good donkey-boy, that my poor son is insolvent; each time that he has been put in prison in the past I have got him free; but today I have persuaded him to declare his bankruptcy and make an end. I am now collecting his clients' goods to return them to their owners and I wish you to hire me your ass to carry them. Here is a dinar; while you are waiting my return you may occupy yourself by breaking the shop to pieces and smashing the jars of dye, so that when the kadi sends his men they may find nothing to seize." "Be it upon my head and before my eyes!" answered the donkey-boy, "Your son, the dyer, has been good to me in times past and I owe him gratitude. Therefore I will break up the place and destroy the stock in Allah's name, and not charge anything for doing it."

Satisfied by this assurance, the old woman loaded all her thefts upon the ass and led it along by its halter in the direction of her house. Having arrived

safely, by the mercy of Allah, she found her daughter Zaynab waiting her return as upon hot coals. "O mother," cried the girl, "my heart has been with you! Have you achieved some brave deception?" "This first morning," answered Dalila, "I have played four excellent tricks on four several persons; a young merchant, the wife of a terrible captain, a libidinous dyer, and a donkey-boy. I bring you all the clothing and ornaments of the first two, the chief goods of the third, and the donkey which used to belong to the fourth." "O mother," cried Zaynab, "now you can no longer go about freely in Baghdad, since all four will be looking for you." "Pooh," answered Dalila, "I do not bother about them, except perhaps the donkey-boy who knows me." We will now leave Dalila for the moment.

The dyer bought the bread-soup and hashed meat, gave them to his apprentice to carry, and took the road to his house. His way lay past the shop; when he reached it he saw the donkey-boy demolishing the fittings and breaking up the great jars. Already he had worked so well that the shop was a mass of ruin and flowed with a kind of blue mud. "Stop! Stop!" cried the dyer; and at once the donkey-boy ceased from his work, saying: "My heart has been with you. Praise be to Allah that you have escaped from prison!" "What are you saying? What does this all mean?" cried Hajj Muhammad, and the man answered: "You have been declared bankrupt while you were in prison." "Who told you that?" asked the dyer with starting eyes and trembling lips. "Your mother told me," replied the other, "and ordered me, in your interest, to break and destroy everything here, so that the kadi's men should find nothing to seize." "Allah confound the Far-One!" exclaimed the as-

tonished tradesman, "My mother has been dead for years." Realising that he had been practised upon, he beat his breast and cried at the top of his voice: "Alas, alas! My goods are lost, my clients' goods are lost!"; while the donkey-boy wept and shouted: "Alas, my ass is lost! My ass is lost! Dyer of my bum, give me back the ass which your mother has taken!" At this Hajj Muhamad threw himself on the donkey-boy and, seizing him by the neck, began to punch him with his fists, crying: "Where is she? Where is your old confederate?" "My ass, where is my ass? Give me back my ass!" yelled the donkey-boy from the bottom of his entrails. A moment more and the two were locked in fight, biting, insulting, and buffeting, butting each other in the stomach and trying to gain advantage, one of the other, by unfair and low blows and divers tricks. Soon a crowd sprang up about them and at last they were separated, not without a shrewd blow or two falling upon the peace-makers. One asked the dyer what the trouble might be, but it was the donkey-boy who answered, crying at the top of his lungs, and adding: "I did it to oblige the dyer!" Then said another: "O Hajj Muhamad, surely you must have known the old woman, to leave her thus in charge of your shop?" "I never saw her until today," he answered, "but I know that she has gone to live in my house with her son and daughter." On this another member of the crowd gave his opinion: "On my conscience, I think that the dyer is responsible for the ass; for, if its owner had not thought that Muhamad had trusted his shop to the old woman, he would not have trusted his animal to her." "O Hajj Muhamad," ventured a third, "as you have lodged this old woman in your house, you ought to give back the ass or pay its value." Then, by

common consent, the crowd accompanied the two combatants to the dyer's house.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NOW LET US return to the young merchant and the girl. While the youth waited in the vestibule to examine his future bride, the young woman waited in the upper chamber until the saintly mother should carry her the idiot assistant's permission to visit Father-of-Thrusts. When the old woman did not come Khatun left the room and descended the stairs, dressed only in her light chemise. As she went down she heard the merchant, who had become aware of the clicking of her anklets, calling up to her: "Be quick, bring your mother to me that we may be married!" "My mother is dead," answered the girl, "Are you not the idiot, assistant to Father-of-Thrusts?" "As Allah lives, light of my eye," called back the youth, "I am not altogether an idiot, but I have some reputation in that other of which you speak." The girl blushed at this reply and, in spite of the merchant's grumbling, remained half-way down the stairs to wait for the holy mother.

While affairs were in this state, the dyer and the donkey-boy, followed by the crowd, knocked at the door and waited long for it to be opened. When no one answered they forced the door and, tumbling into the vestibule, found the young merchant quite naked

and trying to hide his essential nakedness with his two hands. "Son of a bitch, where is your wicked old mother?" cried the dyer. "My mother has been dead for many years," he answered. "The old woman who owns this house is my future mother-in-law." He told the dyer, the donkey-boy, and all the crowd, the story of the offer of marriage, adding: "The bride, whom I am going to examine, is half-way up the stairs behind the door." On this the second door was broken down and the frightened girl discovered, trying to pull the chemise as far down as possible over the glory of her thighs. "Child of adultery, where is your bawd of a mother?" cried the dyer. "My mother has long been dead," she answered in her shame. "The old woman who led me hither is a saint in service of our lord, the Multiplier-of-Pregnancies."

At these ingenious words all who were there, the dyer in spite of his ruined shop, the donkey-boy in spite of his lost ass, and the merchant in spite of his purse and clothing, laughed so heartily that they fell over on their backsides.

When they had thoroughly understood the tricks which had been played on them, the three victims resolved to have vengeance on Dalila. Their first action was to find clothes for the terrified girl, who dressed herself and hurried back to her husband's house.

The dyer, Hajj Muhamad, and the donkey-boy made up their quarrel and asked each other's pardon; then, taking the merchant with them, they sought the emir Kalid, wali of the city, and, after telling him their tale, demanded redress for the calamities which Dalila had inflicted on them. "This is a very strange story, good folk," said the wali; but they answered: "As Allah lives and by the head of the emir, all that

we say is true!" Then said the wali: "But, good folk, how am I going to find one old woman among all the old women of Baghdad? I cannot send my men among the harems to unveil every face." "Alas, alas!" lamented the three: "My shop! . . . My ass! . . . My purse! . . ." The wali had pity on them, and continued: "Good folk, search the city yourselves and if you can bring the old woman to me, I promise to put her to the torture until she confesses." Dalila-the-Wily's three victims had to be content with this. As soon as they left the presence they parted and each went off in a different direction to look for the evil old woman. We will come back to them presently.

Dalila-the-Wily said to her daughter: "All that is nothing. I must find some bigger thing to do." "O mother, I fear for you!" exclaimed Zaynab, but the old woman reassured her, saying: "Have no fears for me; I am like a bean in its pod, safe from fire and water."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

DALILA CHANGED HER Sufi's garments for those of a rich man's servant and went out, revolving further outrages upon the folk of Baghdad. It was not long before she came to a side street, decorated throughout all its length with rich stuff and coloured lamps. The

ground of it was also covered by a thick carpet. She heard the voices of singers and the reverberation of tambourines; at the door of the house from which these sounds came she saw a woman-slave bearing on her shoulder a little boy, splendidly dressed in gold and silver velvet, wearing a red tarbush, round which ran three circles of pearls, having about his neck a gold collar set with diamonds, and a little brocaded mantle on his shoulders. From the guests, who were going in and out, she heard that the house belonged to the syndic of the Baghdad merchants and that the child was his son. By piecing scraps of conversation together she determined that the syndic was that day celebrating the betrothal of his daughter, a marriageable virgin, and that the little boy had been given to the slave to be guarded by her and amused until the guests should have gone, because he was for ever clinging to his mother's skirts and hindering her in her duties as a hostess.

No sooner had old Dalila discovered these things than she said to herself: "My duty for the moment is to wile away the child from the slave." She pushed forward among the crowd, crying: "Shame upon me that I should be so late!" Then, going up to the slave, who was something of a fool, she slipped a counterfeit coin into her hand, saying: "Here is a dinar for yourself, my child. Go up to your mistress, and say: 'Your old nurse, Umm Al-Khayr, rejoices with you in your joy, because of the gratitude which she owes you. On the day of the marriage, she will come with her daughters and bring the customary presents for the bride's women.'" "Good mother," answered the slave, "I would willingly take your message, but every time my young master here sees his mother he clings hold of her garments and hinders her." "I will look

after him for the short time you are gone," said Dalila; and at once the foolish slave trusted the child to her and went upstairs.

The wily one made off as fast as she could with the child and carried him into a dark lane, where she stripped him of all that he wore of value, saying to herself: "This is not all; you are too smart to be content with this. Surely there is more money in this adventure if it be handled properly." Taking up the child again, she hurried to the market of the jewellers and sought out the shop of a certain Jew, a famous dealer in gems. The Jew, who was sitting behind his counter, recognised the child as belonging to the merchants' syndie, as soon as the old woman entered. Now, though he was very rich, he was also very jealous and could not abide that any of his neighbours should make a sale unless he himself made a better one. Therefore he rejoiced on seeing Dalila and asked her politely what she wanted. "Are you not our master, Uzrah the Jew?" she asked. "I am," he said, and she went on: "This child's sister, the daughter of the shahbandar of the merchants, is betrothed today and they celebrate the promising even now. You can see, then, that she has immediate need of certain ornaments, notably two pairs of gold anklets, a pair of gold bracelets, a pair of pearl earrings, a carved gold belt, a ruby-sprinkled jade-hilted dagger and a seal ring." Eagerly the Jew gave her what she asked to the value of at least a thousand dinars. "I will take them on approval," she said, "My mistress will choose what pleases her and then I will come back with the money. In the meanwhile, will you be so good as to look after the young gentleman?" "If you wish it," replied the Jew, "but I do not need such a guarantee."

When young Zaynab-the-Cheat saw her mother return, she asked her what new exploits she had contrived. "Quite a little one this time," answered Dalila, "I stole and stripped the shahbandar's little son and then left him in pawn with Uzrah the Jew, taking jewels to the value of a thousand dinars in exchange!" "Surely this is the end!" cried her daughter, "It will no longer be safe for you to venture abroad in Baghdad." "Fear not for me, my child," replied the old woman. "I have not yet done a thousandth part of what I mean to do."

Meanwhile the foolish young slave had entered the reception hall, saying: "My mistress, your old nurse, Umm Al-Kahayr, sends greetings and good wishes. She says that she rejoices with you and that, on the marriage day she will come with her daughters and act generously towards the bride's women." "Where have you left your young master?" cried her mistress; and she replied: "I left him with the nurse, in case he should get in your way. Here is a gold piece which she gave me for the singers." The chief singer took the coin and at once discovered that it was made of brass. Then cried the syndic's wife in alarm: "Run down, you whore, and bring the boy to me!" The slave hurried downstairs and not finding trace of either the child or the old woman, fell forward on her face, uttering a great cry which brought the other woman running from above. Even ^{his} ^{self} entered. ^{what} ^{had} ^{happened}, ^{When} ^{he} ^{learned} ^{from} ^{his} ^{despairing} ^{wife}, ^{he} ^{went} ^{out} ^{to} ^{look} ^{for} ^{the} ^{child}, ^{who} ^{was} ^{followed} ^{by} ^{all} ^{his} ^{guests}, ^{who} ^{scattered} ^{far} ^{and} ^{wide} ^{to} ^{assist} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{search}. ^{After} ^a ^{thousand} ^{useless} ^{investigations}, ^{he} ^{found} ^{the} ^{boy}, ^{sitting} ^{almost} ^{naked}, ^{on} ^{the} ^{doorstep} ^{of} ^{the} ^{Jew's} ^{shop}. ^{Being} ^{filled} ^{with} ^{anger} ^{as} ^{well} ^{as}

joy, he threw himself upon the Jew, crying: "Wicked old man, what would you do with my son, and why have you stripped him?" "As Allah lives, my master," answered the frightened and astonished Jew, "I never asked for such a guarantee; but the old woman insisted on leaving him with me when she took that thousand dinars' worth of jewels to your daughter." At this the wrath of the shahbandar knew no bounds. "O blackguard," he shouted, "what need has my daughter of your dirty jewels? Give me back my son's clothes and ornaments!" "Help me! Help me! O Mussulmans!" cried the Jew in terror; and in answer to his calling there appeared the first three victims, coming by different roads; that is to say, the donkey-boy, the merchant, and the dyer. When they had heard what had happened they were not long in making up their minds that this was more of the calamitous old woman's handiwork. "We know her!" they cried, "She is a swindler who has already nicely pickled us this day." They told their story to the Jew and the syndic; and in the end the latter was forced reluctantly to say: "It is something that I have found my child. I shall not concern myself for his lost clothes since they have ransomed him; but one day I will get the worth of them out of that old woman!" So saying he hurried back to his house and transported his wife with delight by returning the child to her.

The Jew asked the other three what they thought of doing and when they told him that they meant to continue their hunt for the old woman, he begged to be allowed to accompany them. "Is there any one of you," he asked, "who knew the woman before her thefts?" "I did," answered the donkey-boy; and the Jew continued: "It would be better for us not to

walk together, but to carry out our investigations separately, so as not to give any warning to our quarry." "You are right," said the donkey-boy, "Let us tryst for noon at the shop of Hajj Masud, the Moorish barber." When they had agreed on this meeting place they parted and went their several ways.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT WAS WRITTEN that the donkey-boy should be the first to meet the villainous old woman as she wandered through the city seeking some further mark for her cleverness. He recognised her in spite of her disguise and rushed towards her, crying: "At last I have you, O decrepit thief, O sere and evil tree!" "What is the matter, my son?" she asked; and he cried: "The ass, give me back the ass!" "My child, talk low," she whispered, "and be content to cover up what Allah has already covered with His veil. Is it your ass that you want or the goods of the others?" "Only my ass," he replied; and she went on: "I know that you are poor and I have no thought to deprive you of your ass. I left him for you in charge of the Moorish barber, Hajj Masud, whose shop is just over the way. I will go and ask him to return the animal to you; wait here for a moment." She entered the shop with tears in her eyes and kissed the barber's hand, saying: "Alas, alas!" "What is the matter, good aunt?"

asked Hajj Masud. "Do you not see my son standing outside your shop?" she cried, "He used to be a donkey-boy, but one day, when he was already ill, he exposed himself to a draught, which corrupted his blood and made him mad. Since then he has done nothing but cry for his ass. When he rises, he calls for it; when he lies down, he calls for it; when he walks, he calls for it. A great doctor whom I consulted, said to me: 'Your son's reason is badly dislocated; nothing will cure him and bring him back into the way of sanity except the extraction of his two great molars and a good cauterisation on each temple with the fly cantharides or a hot iron.' Here is a dinar, good barber. You can entice him in by saying: 'Your ass is here.'"

"I will fast for a year," cried the barber, "if I do not most thoroughly give him back his ass!" When he had told one of his two assistants to heat nails red-hot in the fire, he called aloud to the donkey-boy, saying: "Come here, my son; your ass is in the shop!"

As soon as the poor man entered, the barber led him by the hand into his back shop and there struck him in the belly and tripped him up, so that he fell on his back to the ground and was held motionless by the two assistants. The master barber at once thrust down his throat an instrument like a blacksmith's tongs, which he used for taming recalcitrant teeth, and with a single jerk of his arm, pulled out the two molars. Then, in spite of the yells and twistings of his victim, he took up the two red-hot nails in a pair of pincers and liberally cauterised the donkey-boy's temples, calling on Allah the while.

When the double operation was over, he said: "As Allah lives, my lad, your mother will be very pleased

with me! I will call her in, that she may judge of my cure." While the donkey-boy struggled with the two assistants, the barber went back into his shop and behold! . . . the shop was empty, cleaned as if by a mighty wind. There was nothing left. Razors, mother-of-pearl mirrors, scissors, irons, basins, ewers, towels, stools, all had disappeared; not a shadow of any of them remained. Also the old woman herself had vanished; not so much as a smell of her remained. The shop lay there swept and garnished, as if it were being put up for sale.

At the sight of this miraculous theft the barber rushed furiously into his back shop and shook the donkey-boy violently by the throat, crying: "Where is that vile old pimp, your mother?" Half mad with grief and rage the poor man answered: "Son of a thousand virtueless ones, my mother is in the peace of Allah!" The barber shook him again, crying: "Not so; the ancient whore who brought you here was your mother. She has stolen all my goods!" Before the donkey-boy had time to say anything in reply, the three other victims entered the shop, returning from a fruitless search. The dyer, the merchant, and the Jew, seeing the barber, whose eyes were starting out of his head, struggling with their fellow, who displayed burnt and swollen temples, lips foaming with blood, and two molars hanging out of his mouth by their nerves, cried out to know what was the matter. "Justice against this barber, O Mussulmans!" cried the donkey-boy at the top of his voice. He told them what had happened and they asked the barber why he had done these things. He in his turn told them his side of the story and they at once understood that the old woman had brought off yet another coup. "As Allah lives," they cried, "this can be none other than

the work of that wicked old woman!" When mutual explanations had been made and the two adversaries had become reconciled, the barber shut his pillaged shop and joined himself to the other four. They went forth together, the donkey-boy not ceasing to cry aloud: "Alas, my ass! Alas, my molars!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AFTER WANDERING for a long time through various parts of the city they turned a certain corner and immediately the donkey-boy again recognised the hurrying form of Dalila. He threw himself upon her, crying: "Here she is! Now shall she pay for all!"

The five men dragged her to the wali's palace and gave her in charge of the guard, saying: "We would see the emir Kalid." "He is resting," answered the soldiers, "Wait a little until he wakes." Thus it was that the five complainants waited in the courtyard while the old woman was handed over to the eunuch, who shut her into a room of the harem.

By devious ways Dalila reached the apartment of the wali's wife and, after kissing her hand, said to the innocent woman: "My mistress, I wish to see our master, the emir." "He is sleeping," answered the other; "what do you wish with him?" Then said the wily one: "My husband, who is a slave merchant, trusted me, before he went away on his last voyage, with five mamelukes to sell for him. Our master, the

wali, saw them and I consented to sell them to him for one thousand two hundred dinars. I am here to deliver them." Now as it happened, the wali had need of slaves and had gone so far, the day before, as to give his wife a thousand dinars to buy some. The woman therefore believed Dalila and asked where the slaves might be. "Under your window," she answered, "in the courtyard." The wali's wife looked out and saw the five victims waiting for justice. "As Allah lives," she exclaimed, "they are handsome enough men! Each one is worth a thousand dinars." Leaving the window, she handed the money to the old woman, saying: "Good mother, I still owe you two hundred dinars. I beg you to wait for them until the wali wakes." "Mistress," answered Dalila, "I forgive you a hundred for the excellent glass of syrup which I have just drunk; the other hundred I will collect on my next visit. Now I beg you to let me out by the private door of the harem, as I do not wish to see my slaves again since they have ceased to be mine." The wali's wife let her out by the private door and the Protector brought her safely to her own house.

"What have you done this time, dear mother?" cried Zaynab; and Dalila answered: "My child, I have sold the donkey-boy, the dyer, the Jew, the barber, and the young merchant to the wali's wife for a thousand dinars. The donkey-boy is the only one who worries me; he was the son of a bitch who recognised me each time." "Then do not go out any more," said the daughter, "stay in the house and remember the proverb:

*Not every time you drop a cup
Will it be worth the taking up."*

Thus she tried to persuade her mother not to risk the streets again, but she wasted her breath in all she said.

When the wali woke, his wife said to him: "May your sleep be sweet upon you! I congratulate you on the purchase of the five slaves." "What slaves?" asked the wali. "Why do you want to hide the matter from me?" said his wife. "As Allah lives, I have not bought any slaves," exclaimed the wali, "Who told you that I had?" "The same old woman from whom you had them for twelve hundred dinars," she replied, "She showed them to me in the courtyard and, I assure you, the clothes of each are worth a thousand dinars." "You gave her the money?" he asked; and she answered: "I did." The wali hurried down into the courtyard, but could only see the donkey-boy, the barber, the Jew, the merchant, and the dyer. "Where are the five slaves which your mistress bought?" he asked the guards. "Since our lord lay down to rest," they answered, "we have only seen these five." The wali turned to the complainants, saying: "Your venerable mistress has sold you to me; you may start your work by emptying the cesspools." For sole answer the dupes cried out: "If this is justice, we will appeal against you to the khalifat. We are free men, not to be bought and sold. Come with us to the khalifat!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"IF YOU ARE not slaves, you are cheats and rob-

bers!" cried the wali. "You combined this trick with the old woman, but, as Allah lives, I will sell you separately to strangers for a hundred dinars each."

The wali and witnesses were thus quarreling when Mustapha the Street Scourge, captain of the palace guards, entered the courtyard to lay complaint concerning the misadventure of his wife. For you must know that when he returned to his house he had found her ill in bed from fright and mortification, and had learnt the whole story from her. "This would never have happened," she had added, "if it had not been for your cruel words which persuaded me to have recourse to the sheikh, Father-of-Thrusts."

As soon as Mustapha saw the wali, he cried: "I take it that your high office consists of allowing pimping old women to enter the harems and beguile the wives of emirs? As Allah lives, I hold you responsible for the trick which was played upon my wife and the losses she sustained through it!" Then cried the five: "O emir, O valiant Captain Scourge, we put our cause into your hands!" "What have you to complain of?" he cried; and then when he had heard their story: "It is plain that you have been tricked also. The wali does not seem to realise his position."

"O emir," said the wali, "I lay it upon myself to indemnify you for the loss of your wife's effects; and I take the business of the old swindler into my own hands." Then turning to the five, he asked: "Which of you would recognise the woman?" Led by the donkey-boy, they answered in chorus: "We would all recognise her!" "And I," continued the donkey-boy for himself, "would recognise her among a thousand whores by her sharp blue eyes. Give us ten of your guards and we shall catch her."

As chance would have it, no sooner had the five gone

out, followed by the ten guards, than they happened on the old woman and she ran away from them. They caught her, bound her hands behind her back, and led her before the wali. "What have you done with the stolen goods?" thundered Kalid; and Dalila answered: "I have never stolen anything in my life! I do not understand what you are saying." The wali turned to his chief gaoler and commanded him to throw the prisoner into his dampest dungeon for the night; but the gaoler humbly refused, saying: "As Allah lives, I will not take the responsibility, for she is certain to find some way of escaping me." Then said the wali: "Perhaps it will be best to guard her in the sight of all and to watch over her through the hours of the night until she is brought to judgment." In pursuance of this plan, he mounted his horse and set forth, followed by all concerned. They dragged the old woman outside the walls of Baghdad and fastened her by the hair to a post in the open country. Then the wali left the five complainants to watch over her during the night and himself returned to the city.

The five, especially the donkey-boy, began to display their feeling towards the old woman by spattering her with all the names to which they could put their tongues. But everything has an end, even a donkey-boy's sack of abuse, a barber's basin of malice, and a dyer's vat of highly coloured remarks; the five had not slept for three nights and were, besides, worn out with the emotion of their losses; as soon as they had eaten they fell sleeping in a circle round the post.

The night was already far advanced and the five watchers were snoring about their prisoner, when two Bedouins drew near on horseback, chatting so loudly together that Dalila was able to hear what they said. One asked the other: "What was the pleasantest

thing you did when you were staying in wonderful Baghdad, my brother?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OTHER ANSWERED after a silence: "As Allah lives, I ate my favourite food, delicious fried honey cakes with cream. That was the pleasantest thing I did in Baghdad." The first speaker sniffed in the air after the imaginary odour of fried cakes bursting with cream and honey; then he cried: "By the honour of the Arabs, I swear that I will go straight to Baghdad and taste those delightful things!" The Bedouin who had already eaten the cakes took leave of his desirous companion and returned by the way he had come, while the other, hastening towards the city, passed by the post and saw Dalila fastened there. "Who are you and why are you here?" he asked. "O sheikh of the Arabs," sobbed old Dalila, "I put myself under your protection!" "Allah is the most powerful Protector," answered the other, "but why are you fastened to this post?" "O very honourable stranger," she said, "I have an enemy, a merchant-cook of fried honey cakes with cream, the most reputed in Baghdad for that confection. The other day, to avenge a sore injury which he had done me, I went to his counter and spat upon his cakes. He complained of me to the wali, who condemned me to be fastened

to this post and to stay here without food until I consented to eat at one meal ten large dishes filled with fried cakes. Tomorrow morning the plates will be brought; but, as Allah lives, O sheikh of the Arabs, my soul has a disgust for all sweetmeats and especially abhors fried honey cakes with cream. Alas, alas, I shall die of hunger in this place!" "By the honour of the Arabs," answered the Bedouin, "my sole reason for leaving my tribe and visiting Baghdad is to taste these same fried honey cakes. If you wish, good aunt, I will eat all of them in your stead." "They will not let you do it," she replied, "unless you are also fastened to the post instead of me. Yet the thing is possible, for my face has been ever veiled and they will not know the difference if you set me free and make an exchange of clothes." Nothing could have pleased the Bedouin better; he quickly released the old woman and, after changing clothes with her, was fastened to the post himself. Dalila, with a word of farewell, jumped upon the horse, clad in the man's burnous and bound round the head with his fillets twisted of black camel's hair, and galloped away towards Baghdad.

Next morning as soon as the five opened their eyes, they gave their prisoner good day by recalling such epithets as they had not used the night before; but the Bedouin said: "Where are the fried cakes? My stomach greatly desires them." "By Allah, it is a man!" cried the five when they heard the voice. "And he speaks like a Bedouin." The donkey-boy jumped to his feet and hurried up to the post, crying: "What are you doing here? How dared you free the old woman?" "Where are the fried cakes?" answered the prisoner, "I have not eaten all night, so do not

spare the honey. The poor old woman detested pastries, but with me it is otherwise."

The five understood that the Bedouin also had been tricked by Dalila and buffeted their faces, crying: "No man can escape from Destiny or change a word which has been written by Allah!" As they stayed there, uncertain what to do, the wali rode up with his guards and the Bedouin called out to him: "Where are the fried honey cakes?" "What is this?" asked the wali when he saw the man fastened to the post. "It is Fate," answered the five, "the old woman fooled the Bedouin and escaped. We will hold you responsible before the khalifat for her flight, O wali; for, if you had given us some of your guards to watch her, she could not have got away. We are not guards any more than we are slaves to be bought and sold." The wali asked the Bedouin what had happened and the man told his story, larding it with cries of desire and ending: "Now give me the fried cakes!" At this the wali and his guards burst out laughing, while the five rolled vengeful, bloodshot eyes, crying: "We will not leave the wali save in the presence of our master, the Prince of Believers!" The Bedouin, too, when he realised at length that he had been tricked and that there were no fried honey cakes forthcoming, said: "I hold you responsible, O emir, for the loss of my horse and my clothes." Thus the wali was obliged to take them all with him to Baghdad and accompany them into the presence of the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AUDIENCE WAS GRANTED them and they entered the diwan, where already Captain Scourge had foregone them and stood among the first complainants.

The khalifat, who saw to all such business himself, began to interrogate them himself, beginning with the donkey-boy and ending with the wali, and drew forth the story of each with all its details.

Haroun Al-Rachid marvelled, saying: "By the honour of my ancestors, I promise that all which has been stolen shall be restored. The donkey-boy shall have his ass and an indemnity, the barber his furniture and the tools of his trade, the merchant his purse and his clothing, the Jew his gems, the dyer a new shop, and the Bedouin his horse and garments with as many dishes of fried honey cakes as his soul desires. But first the old woman must be found. You, emir Khalid, shall have your dinars returned to you, and you, Mustapha, the jewels and clothing of your wife with damages. I charge you two, especially, to find the woman."

The emir Kalid shook his garments and lifted his hands on high, crying: "As Allah lives, O Commander of the Faithful, I beg you to excuse me! I dare not undertake the task, for after the way I was fooled in the past I cannot guarantee that she would not find some other way of escaping and leaving the burden of her evil deeds with me."

The khalifat laughed and said: "Charge some other with the business, then." "In that case, O Commander of the Faithful," replied Kalid, "give the order

to the ablest searcher in Baghdad, Ahmad-the-Moth, chief of police upon your right hand. Up to the present, for all his cleverness and for all his great monthly wage, he has done nothing." "Step forward, Ahmad!" called the khalifat, and Ahmad-the-Moth advanced, kissing the earth between the khalifat's hands, and saying: "At your orders, O Commander of the Faithful!" "Listen, Ahmad," said Haroun, "there is in this city an old woman who has done such and such. I charge you to find and bring her to me." "I answer for her, O Prince of Believers!" answered Ahmad; and at once left the presence followed by his forty archers, leaving the five and the Bedouin in the hands of the khalifat.

Chief of the archers attendant on Ahmad-the-Moth was a man called Ali Camelback, who was well used to investigations of this kind and was moreover accustomed to speak freely to his captain, the one time robber. "Master Ahmad," said this fellow, "there is more than one old woman in Baghdad; you may believe my beard that the capture will not be an easy one." "Speak what you have in your mind," said Ahmad; and the other continued: "There are not enough of us to circumvent so redoubtable a lady, and I suggest that you ask Hassan-the-Pest to come to our assistance with his forty; for he is even better versed than we are in matters of this sort." Now Ahmad-the-Moth was very unwilling to share any of his glory with his colleague, therefore he answered in a loud voice, so that Hassan-the-Pest, who stood at the great door of the Palace, might hear what he said: "In Allah's name, O Camelback, since when have we needed help in our business?" Hassan-the-Pest was mortified by this answer, coming on top of the khali-

fat's choice of Ahmad. As the latter passed proudly on his horse, followed by his forty, the second chief of police said to himself: "By the life of my head, they will have need of me yet!"

As soon as the troop had come to the open space before the palace, Ahmad encouraged his men, saying: "Good fellows, I wish you to divide into four bands and comb out the four quarters of Baghdad. Tomorrow at noon I will expect you to report to me in the tavern in Mustapha Street." The archers split into four companies as they were bid and went to search the city, while Ahmad-the-Moth took up the trail on his own account.

Rumour soon came to the ears of Dalila and her daughter Zaynab that the khalifat had charged Ahmad-the-Moth with the apprehension of an old woman whose exploits were in the mouth of all; and they were even informed, by one who had overheard it, the name of the tavern which Ahmad had appointed for a meeting with his men. "My daughter," said Dalila, "I am not afraid of these who have been sent against me, so long as Hassan-the-Pest is not with them. He is the only man in Baghdad whose intelligence I respect, and also he knew us in the old days. He could come straight to this place and arrest us; therefore let us thank Allah that he is not employed in the matter." "Dear mother," answered Zaynab, "this seems an excellent opportunity for playing some striking trick on Ahmad and his forty fools. How pleasant that would be, my mother!" "Child of my bowels," said the old woman, "today I am feeling a little unwell; therefore I resign to you the pleasure of over-reaching these forty-one rogues. This thing should be easy for so clever a girl."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZAYNAB, WHO WAS a curved and supple girl, with deep eyes and a delightful face, dressed herself with unusual care and veiled her face with very light silk to heighten the velvet quality of her glances. Rigged out in this way, she kissed her mother, saying: "I swear by my locked and unpierced treasure, that I will make these forty-one my plaything!" Then she left the house and, walking to Mustapha Street, entered the tavern of Hajj Karim of Mosul.

She greeted him sweetly, so that he was quite charmed and rendered her salute with double courtesy. "O Hajj Karim," she said, "here are five dinars for the hire of your large hall until tomorrow. I have invited some friends and do not wish your ordinary frequenters to have access to them." "On your life," he answered, "on the life of your eyes, your pretty eyes, you can have the hall for nothing on condition that you do not stint the drink of your guests." Then said Zaynab with a smile: "My guests are pots whom the potter forgot to breach; all that you have of wine will pass their way, have no fear of that." She returned to Dalila's house and transported, on the donkey-boy's ass and the Bedouin's horse, all that they had of cushions, carpets, stools, cloths, dishes and plates, to the hall which she had hired. After she had carefully arranged these plenishings, spread the

cloths, marshalled wine jars, and added food, she took up her position at the tavern door.

It was not long before she saw ten of Ahmad's archers approach, with Camelback at their head, looking very martial. As he led his nine men up to the tavern he saw the girl who, by a strange chance, had momentarily let slip her veil. "What are you doing here, my child?" asked Camelback, quite charmed with her bold young beauty. "I wait my destiny," she answered, with a long oblique glance, "Are you the great captain Ahmad?" "As Allah lives, I am not," he said, "but I am the leader of these archers, one Ali Camelback, O eye of splendour. There is nothing that Ahmad could do for you which I will not." "O archer prince!" she murmured with a smile, "Surely if good manners and exquisite politeness were lacking a home they would not have far to seek. Come in and be very welcome as charming guests." She led the ten into the hall and, making them sit down in a circle round the wine jars, gave them deep drinks of wine mingled with drowsy banj, so that they fell upon their backs like drunken elephants or muddled buffaloes and dropped into a deep sleep. Zaynab dragged them one by one by their feet to the back of the tavern and, piling them on top of each other, covered them carefully and concealed them with a curtain; then she made all neat again in the hall and took up her post by the door.

Soon the second file of ten appeared and suffered the same fate as the first, from the smiling eyes and drugged offerings of the young Zaynab. When the third ten and the fourth ten had gone the same way and had been piled up behind the curtain, Zaynab again straightened the hall and watched for Ahmad-

the-Moth. Soon he rode up on his horse, shooting dangerous fires from his eyes and with the hairs of his beard and moustaches bristling like the coat of a starved hyena. When he had dismounted and tied his horse to an iron ring in the tavern wall, he called out: "Where are these sons of dogs? I ordered them to wait for me here. Have you seen them, O slut?" Zaynab wriggled her hips, smiled with her red mouth and sent two killing glances towards Ahmad, saying: "Of whom do you speak, my master?" Ahmad felt his entrails moving about his stomach, and a certain inheritance from his father, with its double interest, beginning to notice the girl. As Zaynab stood there in her childish pose, he said: "Sweet maid, I am looking for my forty archers." Zaynab feigned to be struck with a sudden sentiment of respect; she came forward to Ahmad and kissed his hand, saying: "O great chief of police, your forty men begged me to tell you that they saw old Dalila crossing the bottom of this street and have gone in pursuit of her. They promise that they will bring her in presently and pray you to wait in the hall of the tavern, where I will myself be proud to be your minister." Ahmad-the-Moth followed the girl into the tavern where the wiles of her beauty soon had him drinking the doctored cup. As soon as he was overcome, Zaynab stripped him of all his ornaments and clothes, except his vest and drawers. Then she pillaged the forty in the same way and, loading all the clothes, together with the plenishing which she had brought to the tavern, upon the backs of the donkey-boy's ass, the Bedouin's horse, and Ahmad's costly charger, made all speed to her mother's house where she was received by Dalila-the-Wily with tears of joy.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AHMAD-THE-MOTH and his forty archers slept for two days and two nights; when they woke on the third morning they did not know where they were; but, as soon as their wits had cleared a little, they guessed the authorship of their humiliation and cursed aloud. It was very much against their stomachs to show themselves in the street in their undergarments, especially as they had so haughtily refused the services of Hassan-the-Pest; but as there was no help for it, Ahmad ventured at last into the street clad only in his vest and drawers. The forty archers followed him in the same undress and the first person they saw was Hassan-the-Pest. At once he understood what had happened and began to sing, as if unconscious of his colleague's presence:

*Green girls think men are all alike
Because each wears a turban;
But one will be a country tyke
And one a knowing urban.
One be a white and kindling star,
One murky, lacking culture;
One a clean feed, as eagles are,
And one a corpse-fed vulture.*

When Hassan had finished his song he pretended to recognise Ahmad for the first time, and said: "As

Allah lives, great Ahmad, these mornings are cool upon the Tigris. Is it wise to come out in your vest and drawers?" "O Hassan," answered Ahmad, "I know something colder than these mornings upon the Tigris, and that is your sense of humour. No one escapes his destiny and I was destined to be fooled by a young girl. Do you know her?" "I know her as well as I know her mother," replied Hassan, "Would you like me to go and capture the two of them?" "How can that be?" asked Ahmad; and the other replied: "You have only to appear before the khalifat and shake your collar as a sign of incapacity; then you may beg him to transfer the arrest to me." Acting on this advice, Ahmad proceeded to the diwan with Hassan, as soon as he had put on fresh clothes. When the khalifat asked: "Where is the old woman, O Ahmad?" he shook his collar, and said: "As Allah lives, Commander of the Faithful, I do not know. Captain Hassan would do the business better. He not only knows the old woman, but assures me that she has solely done all this in order to be brought to the notice of our master, the khalifat." "Is that true, O Hassan?" asked Al-Rachid, "You really know the old woman? You believe that she has done all this to win my favour?" "Indeed, yes, O Prince of Believers," replied Hassan; and at once the khalifat exclaimed: "By the tomb and honour of my ancestors, if she will give back all that she has taken, I will pardon her!" "Give me a guarantee of safety for her, my lord," said Hassan; and, when the khalifat threw down his handkerchief as a guarantee, he took it up and, leaving the diwan, ran straight to the house of Dalila.

As soon as Zaynab opened to him, he asked where her mother might be and she answered: "Upstairs." Then he said: "Tell her that Hassan, chief of police

upon the left hand, has brought her the kerchief of safety from the khalifat on condition that she returns what she has stolen. Beg her to descend of her own free will, or I shall be obliged to use force." Dalila had heard what he said and now cried down: "Throw me the kerchief and I will go with you to the khalifat with all my takings." The Pest threw her the handkerchief and she tied it round her neck; then, with her daughter's help she loaded the ass and the two horses with all her booty. Then said Hassan, who had been watching: "There remain only the clothes of Ahmad and his forty." "By the Great Name," answered Dalila, "I never took them." "That is true," he replied, laughing, "but I think Zaynab here had a hand in it. Very well, keep them." Then he started out, leading the three animals by a single long trace, and brought Dalila into the presence of the khalifat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN AL-RACHID actually saw the diabolical old woman, the order sprang to his lips unbidden for her to be thrown upon the blood carpet and forthwith beheaded. "I am under your protection, O Hassan!" she cried; so the Pest kissed the khalifat's hands, saying: "I demand her pardon, O Prince of Believers! Behold she wears the kerchief of clemency about her neck." "That is true," answered Haroun, "I pardon her for your sake." Then he turned to Dalila, saying:

"Come here, old woman; what is your name?" "My name is Dalila," she replied, "I am the widow of your late master of pigeons." "You are not lacking in remarkable expedients," said the khalifat, "I confirm you in the name of Dalila-the-Wily. Now tell me why you played so many tricks upon these people and raised such a stir in our city?" Dalila threw herself at his feet and answered: "Not for greed, O Commander of the Faithful, but because after hearing tell of the one-time shifts and tricks of your two chiefs of police, it occurred to me that, if I could do the like and even perhaps surpass Ahmad and Hassan in their old way of business, our master the khalifat might be moved to reinstate me in the positions of my late husband."

At this point the donkey-boy leapt to his feet, crying: "Let Allah judge between me and this old woman! Not content with stealing my ass, she incited the Moorish barber to pluck out my two molars and cauterise my temples with red-hot nails." Then the Bedouin rose and cried: "Let Allah judge between me and this old woman! Not content with fastening me to the post in her place and stealing my horse, she roused in me inward-turning desire for fried honey cakes." After this the dyer, the barber, the Jew, the young merchant, Captain Scourge, and the wali, all rose in turn demanding justice and damages from Allah. When he had heard them out, the large-minded and open-handed khalifat returned each what had been taken from him with an ample gratuity suiting the particular case. He gave the donkey-boy a thousand golden dinars as a composition for his teeth and burns, and also appointed him chief of the corporation of donkey-boys. All the complainants left the diwan with their troubles already forgotten, congratulating

each other on the justice and generosity of the khali-fat.

"Now, O Dalila," said Haroun Al-Rachid, "you may ask whatever you wish of me." Dalila kissed the earth between his hands and answered: "O Commander of the Faithful, I ask only of your benevolence that you give me back the duties and emoluments of my late husband, who was director of your carrier pigeons. I understand the work; for, when my good man was alive, my daughter and I used to feed the pigeons, clean the lofts and attach the letters. Also it was I, and not my husband, who looked after the great khan which you had built for the pigeon service and which is guarded day and night by forty negroes and those forty dogs which you took in battle from the king of the Afghans, who were of the seed of Sulayman." "Be it so, Dalila," cried Haroun, "I shall write out your appointment at once, charging you with the conduct of the great khan, with powers over the forty negroes and the forty Afghan hounds. Your head shall answer for the loss of one of the pigeons, which are dearer to me than my own children; but I do not doubt your capacity." Then said Dalila: "I would also like my daughter, Zaynab, to live with me in the khan and help me with its general supervision."

The khalifat readily gave his permission and Dalila, after kissing his hands, returned to her own house and at once set to work to transport all her belongings to the great khan and arrange them in the pavilion at the entrance. That very day she took command of the forty negroes and rode on horseback to the palace, clad in man's garments and wearing a gold helmet, to take her orders and collect any messages which had to be sent into the provinces. When night came she loosed the forty dogs, sprung from the hounds of the shep-

herds of Sulayman, in the great courtyard of the khan. Every day thereafter she made her official call at the palace, wearing her gold helmet surmounted by a silver pigeon, and accompanied by her forty negroes dressed in red brocaded silk. As a suitable decoration for her new home she hung about the walls the clothes of Ahmad-the-Moth, Ali Camelback, and the thirty-nine archers.

Thus it was that Dalila-the-Wily and her daughter Zaynab-the-Cheat, both of Baghdad, obtained by their remarkable address the honourable command of the royal pigeons and the control of the forty negroes and the forty nocturnal dogs. But Allah sees more clearly!

Now, O auspicious king, continued Shahrazade, it is time to tell you of Ali Quicksilver and his adventures with Dalila and her daughter Zaynab, with Dalila's brother Zurayk, the fried fish merchant, and Azaria, the Jew magician. The details are infinitely more astonishing than any which you have heard up to the present. "As Allah lives," said King Shahryar to himself, "I will not kill her until I have heard the adventures of Ali Quicksilver."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was in Baghdad at the time of Ahmad-the-Moth and Hassan-the-Pest, another robber so subtle and elusive that the

police could never put their hand on him. They would think that they had him and then he would slip between their fingers like a bead of mercury; that is why in Cairo, which was his native city, he had been nicknamed Ali Quicksilver.

As I have said, Ali Quicksilver lived in Cairo before he came to Baghdad and his reasons for changing his city are worth being recorded at the beginning of this tale.

One day he was sitting, sad and idle, among his companions in the cellar which was their headquarters; and, though the men of his band tried to distract him from his black humour, he continued to sit lowering in his corner with a frowning face and bent brows. "Chief," said one, "there is nothing better than a walk through the streets and markets of Cairo to cure a fit of the blues." So Ali, to have done with this chatter, went out and wandered at random in the city without his oppression being at all lifted. He came at length to the street called Red, where all the folk made eager way for him out of their great respect.

As he was about to enter a tavern where it was his custom to get drunk, he saw a water-carrier approach him with his goatskin bag upon his back, clinking his two copper cups as he came along. This fellow used to chant many street cries, in some of which his water appeared as honey, and in others as wine. On this day he was singing, to the rhythm of his cups:

*There's nothing like the blood of grapes
To give escapes
From care's infesting, festering apes.
To set the wit upon probation,
To give an edge to conversation,*

*To make a friend of a relation,
There's nothing like the blood of grapes.*

But when he saw Ali Quicksilver he banged his cups more loudly and, leaving imagination, chanted:

*Here's cool water for you,
Here's fresh water!
Crystal light, my water,
Joy of throats, my water,
Diamonds, my water!*

"My lord, do you wish a cup?" he asked. Quicksilver nodded; and the man, filling a cup which he had meticulously rinsed, offered it, saying: "Delight! Delight!" Ali looked at the cup for a moment and then spilled the water on the ground, saying: "Give me another." The carrier was offended at this, and cried: "As Allah lives, my water is clearer than a bird's eye! Why do you throw it away?" "It is my humour," answered Ali, "pour me another." The man filled the cup a second time and handed it, with due observance, to Ali, who again spilled it, saying: "Pour once more." "If you do not want to drink," exclaimed the porter as he handed the third cupful, "let me go about my business." But this time Ali drained the cup at one draught and handed it back to the carrier with a golden dinar. Instead of showing himself pleased at such royal payment, the carrier looked Quicksilver up and down and said sardonically: "Good luck, my boy; small folk are one thing and great lords are another." Ali needed but this to make his anger boil over; he seized the carrier by his gaberdine and, while with one hand he rained blows upon him, with the other he banged him and his

waterskin against the wall of the public fountain which stands in the street called Red. "Son of a pimp," he cried, "do you find a golden dinar so little for three cups of water? I have not drunk or wasted more than a pint, and your whole supply is not worth more than three silver pieces." "What you say is true, my lord," gasped the water-carrier. "Then why did you speak to me like that?" asked Ali, "Have you ever met with a more generous man in all the world?" "As Allah lives, I have," said the man, "I have met a more generous man than you; for as long as women bear there will be matchless generosity among the great." "Who was this man?" asked Quicksilver, and the other answered: "If you will loose me and sit down on the step of the fountain I will tell you my story which is a very strange one."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALI LET GO of the man and sat down with him, beside the waterskin, on the marble steps of the fountain. Then the water-carrier said:

O generous master, my father was chief of the corporation of water-carriers in Cairo, not the wholesale folk who supply houses, but the retail, like myself, who cry the precious stuff from street to street. When he died he left me five camels, a mule, a shop and a house, which was more than enough for my condition. But the poor are never satisfied and, if by chance they

attain satisfaction, they die. I thought that I would increase my inheritance by trading, and so, getting as many merchants as I could to trust me with their goods, I set out with my camels and mules to trade at Al-Hijaz at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca. But the poor never get rich and, if by chance they attain riches, they die. I did so bad a trade that by the time the pilgrimage was finished, I had lost all my belongings and was obliged to sell my camels and my mule to satisfy my most pressing creditors. "If I go back to Cairo," I said to myself, "those to whom I owe money will have me thrown into prison." Therefore I joined a Syrian caravan and went with it to Damascus, Aleppo, and Baghdad. As soon as I got to the last city, I called upon the chief of my corporation there and after I had recited the opening chapter of the Koran to him in good Mussulman fashion, I wished him peace. When he had heard my story he provided me with a carrier's sloop, a waterskin and two cups; and I went out on to the road of Allah, crying my cry in all quarters of the city as we do in Cairo. But the poor will stay poor, for that is their destiny.

I soon saw that there is a great difference between the people of Baghdad and those of Cairo. In Baghdad they are never thirsty and those few who need a drink do not pay, because they consider that water is from Allah. The answers of the first folk whom I addressed showed me that I was in for a bad business; one said: "Have you given me food that you now offer me drink?" and another: "Profit on your wares should go to Allah! Pass on your way in peace!" I did not allow myself to be discouraged, but tried the markets, stopping before the most prosperous looking shops and clinking my copper cups. Yet no one signed to me to pour and, at noon, I had not earned enough

to buy me a crust of bread and a cucumber. The poor are sometimes hungry, but hunger is less hard than humiliation; the rich know humiliation and bear it less easily than the poor. I was offended by the way you behaved towards me, my master, not for my own sake, but because water is an excellent gift from God. Yet, indeed, your treatment concerns yourself alone.

Seeing that my trade in Baghdad had begun so sorrily, I said to myself: "It would be better for you to die in a prison of your own city than among these strangers who do not wish for water." While I was thus murmuring to myself in very low spirits, I saw a great movement and running together of people in the market. As my business consists principally in joining every crowd, I ran as fast as I could towards the disturbance with my waterskin on my back. When I had caught up with the people, I saw a splendid procession of men walking in two files, carrying long sticks, wearing pearl embroidered bonnets and costly silk burnous, and jutting rich swords from their hips. At their head rode a man of angry aspect before whom all the people bowed. "What is this procession and who the rider?" I asked of one who stood by me. "Anyone could tell," he answered, "by your Egyptian accent and your ignorance, that you do not belong to Baghdad. That noble on the horse is Ahmad-the-Moth, chief of police on the right side of the khalifat. It is his duty to keep order in the streets and he gets a thousand dinars a month, like his colleague, Hassan-the-Pest. Each of his men has a hundred dinars a month. They have just come from the diwan and are going to their own place for their midday meal."

At once I began to give my street cry in the Egyptian manner, accompanying myself by ringing the cups, even as you heard just now. The chief of police

heard me, saw me, and rode to my side, saying: "O Egyptian brother, I well remember your cry. Give me a cup of water." He took the cup I offered and twice threw the contents on the ground, just as you did, my master, and then, also like you, drank the third filling of the cup at a single draught. "Long live the people of Cairo, my brother!" he cried in a loud voice, "Why did you come to this city, where water-carriers are neither paid nor honoured?" When I told him the story of my debts, he welcomed me to Baghdad and gave me five golden dinars. Then he turned to his men, saying: "Because of the love of Allah, I recommend this countryman of mine to your liberality." On this hint, each archer of the train took a cup of my water and paid me a dinar for it, so that I soon had more than a hundred dinars in the copper box at my belt. Then said Ahmad-the-Moth: "This shall be your price each time you pour us drink while you are in Baghdad." Thus it was that in a few days my box was full and when I counted the contents there was over a thousand dinars. "Now is the time to return to my own country," I said to myself, "One's native city is best and I have debts to pay there." With this project in mind I presented myself at the diwan, where I was already known and honoured, and began to take leave of my benefactor by reciting this verse:

*A stranger building in a stranger land
Lays his foundation on the fickle air;
Against a breeze his palace may not stand
And the first puff of wind will leave him bare.*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"A CARAVAN is setting out for Cairo," I continued, "and I would join with it in order to return to my own people." At once Ahmad ordered me to be given a mule and a hundred dinars, saying: "In my turn, I would charge you with a confidential mission. Do you know many of the folk in Cairo?" "I know all who are generous," I answered. "Then take this letter," said he, "and give it into the hands of Ali Quicksilver, my old companion. Say to him from me: 'Your chief sends you salutation and good wishes. He is at present with the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid.'"

After taking the letter and kissing Captain Ahmad's hand, I left Baghdad and in five days found myself back in Cairo. I sought out my creditors and paid them to the last dirham, with the money which Ahmad's generosity had enabled me to earn in Baghdad. Then I put on my slop again and became a water-carrier as before. All the time, as I ply my trade, I am searching for Ali Quicksilver, Ahmad's friend, that I may give him the letter which I carry in the folds of my gaberdine.

Such, good master, is the story of my most generous client.

When the water-carrier had finished his story, Ali Quicksilver embraced him like a brother, saying: "My friend, forgive me for treating you so ill. The man of whom you have spoken, who is certainly more generous than I am, though perhaps the sole human of whom that might be said, is my one-time chief. I am Ali Quicksilver, his old companion. Rejoice, my

friend, and brighten your heart and eyes, and give me the letter."

At once the carrier gave the letter to Ali who opened and read it. It ran as follows:

"Greeting from Ahmad, Chief of Police, to the first and most famous of his children, Ali Quicksilver.

"O ornament upon perfection, I write upon a flying leaf. If I were a bird I should hasten on the wings of desire towards your arms; but how may a bird move when its wings are clipped?

"You must know, my beautiful, that I am now at the head of forty good scoundrels, all old doers like ourselves, masters of a thousand splendid thefts. You may judge of their quality when I tell you that Ali Camelback is one of them. Our master, the khalifat, has made me chief of police on his right hand. I am concerned with the city and her streets; I touch a thousand dinars every month, without counting the little usual and unusual extras from folk who wish to stand well with me.

"Dearest, if you would have a wider field for your genius and see the door open to riches and honour, come and rejoin your ancient in Baghdad. If you can contrive a few exploits of the old kind in this city, I promise to obtain the khalifat's favour for you, and that will lead to an appointment worthy of both you and our friendship, with emoluments as great as mine.

"Come, my son, and swell my heart with pleasure.

"The peace and blessing of Allah be upon you, O Ali!"

As soon as Ali read this letter he trembled for joy. Brandishing his long stick in one hand and the letter in the other, he executed a fantastic dance on the steps of the fountain, knocking over several beggars and old

women. Then he kissed the paper a great many times and, after pouring all the gold which his copper belt contained into the hands of the water-carrier as thanks and commission for the good news, hastened to rejoin his band in the underground chamber.

"My children," he said to them, "I recommend each of you to the other." "Are you leaving us then?" cried his lieutenant. "My destiny waits me in Baghdad at the hands of my old captain, Ahmad-the-Moth," answered Ali. Then said the robbers: "Things are not going well for us just now, our larder is empty. What will become of us without you?" "Even before I get to Baghdad," answered Ali, after some deliberation, "in fact, as soon as I reach Damascus, I will find some means of satisfying your necessity. Trust in me, my children." He took off his clothes and, after ablution, put on a close-fitting robe and a traveller's mantle with wide sleeves; he thrust two daggers and a cutlass into his belt, placed a tarbush of extraordinary design upon his head and, taking in his hand a great lance forty-two cubits long made out of collapsible sections of bamboo, mounted his horse and left the city.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NO SOONER HAD he left Cairo than he saw a caravan bound for Damascus and Baghdad. This he joined and found that it belonged to the syndie of the Damas-

cus merchants, a very rich man who was returning from Mecca. Ali, who was young, handsome and still unbearded, was very much to the syndic's taste and greatly appealed to the camel-men and muleteers. He succeeded, however, not only in defending himself from certain of their nocturnal enterprises, but also in saving the caravan from cut-throat Bedouins and wandering lions, so that when they reached Damascus each man of the party thanked him with a gift of five dinars and the syndic gave him a thousand. At once he remembered his companions and sent back all the money to Cairo, save the bare sum necessary for his journey to Baghdad.

Thus it was that Ali Quicksilver of Cairo left his own country and came to Baghdad to find his destiny at the hands of Ahmad-the-Moth, his friend and sometime tutor.

As soon as he entered the city he asked the direction of his friend's house from many passengers, who either would not or could not enlighten him. In the course of his enquiries he came to the square of Al-Nafz, where he saw many little boys playing together under the leadership of the smallest of them, Mahmud Miscarriage, the nephew of Zaynab-the-Cheat. "O Ali," thought Quicksilver to himself, "children know most of the news." Acting on this thought, he went to the shop of a sweetmeat seller and bought a large lump of *halwa*, confected of sugar and sesame oil. Then, holding his purchase in his hand, he went up to the children, calling out: "Who would like some *halwa*?" Mahmud Miscarriage prevented the other little boys from coming forward and approached Ali by himself, saying: "Give me the *halwa*." Quicksilver gave him the sweet and at the same time slipped a silver piece into his hand; but, when Miscarriage saw

the money, the child thought that the man wished to seduce him and therefore cried: "Go away, for I am not for sale. I do not do those disgraceful things. Ask anyone and they will tell you."

Ali, who had no thought for such wickedness at such a time, hastened to reassure the crapulous child by saying: "That money is the price of information. I have paid you highly because bold fellows are always open handed with others of their kind. Can you tell me where I will find the house of Ahmad-the-Moth?" "If that is all you want, the thing is easy," answered Miscarriage, "I will go before you and when we reach the house I shall pick up a stone between my toes and cast it sideways at the door. Thus you will know what you want and yet no one will have seen me pointing out the place to you." Quicksilver followed the boy and, when he saw a stone jerked sideways at a certain door, marvelled at the little scamp's prudence and precosity, caution and skill, malice and quickness. "O Mahmud," he cried, "when I am named captain of the guard or chief of police, you shall be the first of my braves."

Mahmud disappeared and Ali knocked at Ahmad's door. As soon as the noise was heard within, the Moth leapt joyfully to his feet and cried to Camelback: "Run and open to the fairest of the sons of men! He who knocks is my old lieutenant from Cairo, Ali Quicksilver; I recognise his manner of knocking." Camelback hastened to lead Ali into Ahmad's presence and the two old friends embraced each other tenderly. After the first effusion of greeting Ahmad introduced his guest to the forty archers, who welcomed him like a brother; then he fetched out a magnificent robe and put it upon Ali, saying: "When the khalifat appointed me chief of police on his right and gave me

uniforms for my men, I put aside this dress for you, feeling that one day or another I should find you." Ali sat down among them in the place of honour and a great feast, which lasted all night, was set before all to celebrate his coming.

On the following morning when the hour came for Ahmad to present himself before the khalifat, he said to his friend: "O Ali, you must be prudent for your first few days in Baghdad; be careful not to leave the house, for if you do you will be noticed by the folk of this part, whose eyes are ever sticky with curiosity. Do not think that Baghdad is like Cairo; our city is the khalifat's throne and spies swarm here as do flies in Egypt. Rogues and swindlers multiply in Baghdad as geese and toads in Cairo." "My ancient," answered Ali, "surely I have not come to Baghdad to be shut up between four walls like a virgin." But Ahmad counselled patience and set out for the diwan at the head of his archers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALI QUICKSILVER ABODE patiently in the house for three days; but on the fourth his heart was heavy and he asked Ahmad if the time was not come for him to set about those meritorious thefts which were to gain him the favour of the khalifat. "There is a time for everything, my son," answered Ahmad, "Leave your case entirely in my hands and I will slip a word into

Haroun's ear about you, even before you have undertaken any exploits."

In spite of this advice Quicksilver felt, as soon as Ahmad had gone out, that he could stand his imprisonment no longer. Telling himself that he but meant to take the air for a minute or so, he left the house and began wandering about the streets of Baghdad, stopping occasionally before the counter of a cookshop or confectioner to eat a mouthful of their wares. As he was thus employed he saw coming towards him a band of negroes dressed in red silk, wearing high bonnets of white felt, and armed with great steel cutlasses. They marched orderly, two by two, and behind them rode an old woman on a bedizened mule. Upon her head was a gold helmet topped with a silver pigeon and she glowed in a mail-coat of fine steel.

This was none other than Dalila-the-Wily, officer of the pigeons, who had left the diwan and was returning to the khan. She did not know Ali Quicksilver but, as she passed him, was agreeably surprised by his youth and elegance, and disagreeably by a certain resemblance between his expression and that of Ahmad-the-Moth, her enemy. She whispered a word to one of her negroes and at once the man left the rank and began to ask secretly among the merchants for the name and condition of the handsome youth. None could give the information, so, as soon as Dalila entered her pavilion, she told Zaynab to bring her the table of divining sand. "My daughter," she said, "I saw a young man in the market who is so handsome that beauty herself would choose him for her favourite, but the look in his eyes reminded me of Ahmad-the-Moth, our enemy. I am very much afraid that this unknown has come to Baghdad to ply us some evil turn. I wish to consult the sand about him."

She shook the sand according to cabalistic art, murmuring words and reading backward charms over it; then she constructed a figure with algebraic and alchemical ciphers. "My daughter," she cried, "the handsome young man is one Ali Quicksilver of Cairo, he is a friend of Ahmad-the-Moth, who has called him to Baghdad to plague us, in revenge for the business of the drugged wine and the stolen clothes. The youth lodges even now with Ahmad." "Dear mother," answered the girl, "why make such a fuss about a beardless boy?" "Beardless or not," retorted Dalila, "the sand tells me that his fate bears strongly upon yours and mine." "We shall see," said Zaynab, and at once dressed herself in her finest. When she had added velvet to her look with a stick of kohl and joined her brows with perfumed black paste, she left the house in the hope of meeting the young man.

She walked slowly through the markets of Baghdad, undulating her hips and moving her eyes beneath their little veil; so that her path was strewn with destructive glances, with smiles for some, silent promises for others, coquetries and temptations, with eye answers and lashes questioning, murders with the lids, awakening by bracelets, music of anklets and general fire for all. Soon her luck brought her opposite Ali Quicksilver, who leant over a counter of *kenafa*, and she recognised him by his beauty. She struck him with her shoulder as if by accident and made him stumble; then, as if offended, she said: "Good luck to the blind, O eagle-sighted one!"

Pierced through and through by her glance, Ali contented himself with smiling: "You are beautiful, my child," he said, "To whom do you belong?" "To anyone handsome and resembling you," she answered. "Are you married or a maid?" he asked. "Married,

you will be glad to hear," she replied; then he asked: "Shall it be at your house or mine?" "Mine," said she, "I am a merchant's daughter and married to a merchant. This is the first day I have been able to go abroad. This morning my husband went away for a week, and as soon as he left I determined to enjoy myself. I told my servant to cook some of my favourite dishes and then came out to find someone as handsome and well-mannered as yourself to share them with me and stay the night. Love came into my heart as soon as I saw you; will you deign to uplift and rejoice my soul by eating a mouthful at my cloth?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"A GUEST SO CHARMINGLY invited hardly could refuse," said Ali, and he followed the girl from street to street, keeping a prudent distance behind her. As he walked, he thought to himself: "Ali, for a stranger in this city you are being very imprudent. Who knows that the husband will not fall upon you while you sleep, and politely cut off your head with his sword? A wise man has said: 'An unworthy friend when he is a guest in a strange land shall be chastised by the Host of all.' It will be safer for me to excuse myself politely." Taking advantage of a moment when they were crossing an unfrequented square he caught up with the girl, saying: "My child, take this dinar for yourself and let us postpone till another day." "By

the Great Name," she answered, "you must be my guest today, for I have never felt so disposed for multitudinous games of strength." Hearing this Ali followed her again until she stopped before a great house, the door of which was locked. Zaynab made as if to search for the key in her garments; then she cried in a vexed voice: "I have lost the key! How can we open the door? Will you not try?" "How can I open a lock without a key?" objected Ali, "I do not want to use force." She answered with a glance from beneath her veil which at least opened all Quicksilver's locks. In spite of what he had said, he set his hand to the door and lo! even before Zaynab could murmur the name of the mother of Moses, the door was somehow open.

The girl led Ali into a hall, hung with fine weapons and richly carpeted, where she bade him sit down. She spread a cloth and then, sitting down by his side, ate with him, serving him mouthfuls from her own fingers, and joyfully drank with him, without ever allowing a touch, a kiss, a pinch, or a bite to come her way. Each time he leaned over her, she caught his kiss upon her hand and, when he pressed her, told him that desire grew full only with darkness.

When the meal was finished they rose and went out into the courtyard to wash their hands. Zaynab insisted on raising the bucket from the well herself; while she was doing so she uttered a cry and leaned far over the brim, beating her breast and stretching down her arm. "What is the matter, eye of my heart?" asked Quicksilver. "Alas, my ruby ring!" she answered, "My husband bought it yesterday for five hundred dinars; it was too large for me, so I lessened the opening with wax, but now it has fallen into the well. The water is not deep; I must strip naked

and go down to find my husband's gift. Turn your face to the wall and let me undress." "It would be shame upon me," answered Ali, "to let you go down when I am here. I will find the ring myself." Without more ado he stripped to the skin and seizing the fibre rope between his hands let himself down to the bottom of the well in the bucket. When he came to the surface of the cold black water, he let go the rope and dived after the ring. Immediately Zaynab hauled up the bucket, and crying: "Perhaps Ahmad-the-Moth will help you out!" ran from the house with all Quick-silver's clothes beneath her arm. She shut the door behind her and returned to the khan of pigeons.

The house to which Zaynab had taken Ali Quick-silver belonged to an emir of the diwan who was absent on business. When he returned and found the door of his house unfastened, he imagined that a thief had broken in and calling his groom to him, searched the whole building to see if anyone was there. Finding that nothing had been taken and that there was no trace of any robber (for Zaynab had cleared away all signs of the stolen banquet) he thought that he would wash after his journey and told the groom to fetch him fresh water from the well. The man went out and lowered the bucket but, when he would have raised it again, it was unnaturally heavy. He looked down the well and, seeing a vague black form seated in the bucket, took it for an Ifrit and, letting go the rope, ran to his master, crying: "There is an Ifrit sitting in the bucket of the well!" "What is he like?" asked his master; and the other answered: "He is black and terrible and grunts like a pig." Then said the emir: "Run and fetch four learned readers of the Koran that they may recite passages from the Book and exorcise him."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE GROOM HASTENED out and soon returned with four readers, who ranged themselves round the well and began to recite verses of conjuration, while the master and his man slowly raised the bucket. All of them started back in afright when the Ifrit jumped to land, crying: "Allah Akbar!" The emir was the first to perceive that he had to do with a human being. "Are you a thief?" he asked. "No, by Allah, I am not!" answered Quicksilver, "I am a poor fisherman. While I was sleeping by the banks of the Tigris, I dreamed a beautiful dream, but a false one. I woke to saddest realities. At once I undressed and went down into the water to cleanse myself; but a whirlpool sucked me to the bottom and an underground current carried me through what dark ways I know not until I came to your well. I thank both Allah and you, my lord, for my salvation." The emir did not doubt for a moment the truth of this recital, so he gave Ali an old mantle to cover his nakedness and sent him away with many expressions of commiseration.

Quicksilver found Ahmad-the-Moth anxiously awaiting him. When he told his story he was well mocked by all and especially by Camelback, who said: "How, in the name of Allah, can you ever have been the leader of a band in Cairo, when the first girl you meet in Baghdad can fool you and rob you of your clothes?" Also Hassan-the-Pest, who happened to be visiting his

colleague, was led to remark: "O simple Egyptian, do you know the name of the girl who played this trick on you, or whose daughter she is?" "As Allah lives," answered Quicksilver, "she is a merchant's daughter and a merchant's wife, but I do not know her name." Hassan gave a mighty laugh at this: "I will tell you more about her," said he, "You take her to be a married woman, but I will swear to her virginity. Her name is Zaynab; she is no merchant's daughter, but the worthy child of Dalila-the-Wily, mistress of the pigeons. The two of them turn Baghdad round their little fingers. Why, she was the very girl who stole the clothes from your own captain, Ahmad, and his forty archers. What do you propose to do now?" "Marry the girl," answered Ali, after consideration, "Even after what has happened I love her to distraction." Then said Hassan: "In that case, my boy, I will furnish the means, for without me you can give up all thought of the girl." "Help me with your advice, O Hassan!" cried Quicksilver, and the other continued: "Gladly, if you will promise afterwards to drink of no palm but mine and walk only under my flag." "I will be your lad and your disciple, O Hassan," agreed Ali. Then said the Pest: "Strip yourself naked to begin with."

When Ali Quicksilver had undressed, Hassan took a pot filled with a pitch-coloured liquid and, dipping a feather, blackened the youth's body and face until he looked just like a negro. To complete the resemblance Hassan stained his lips and the circles of his eyes with red kohl. When all was dry, the chief of police covered the old heritage from Ali's father with a loin cloth, saying: "Now you are a negro. The next step is for you to become a cook. Listen carefully: Dalila's cook, whose business it is to prepare food,

not only for the old lady and her daughter, but for the forty negroes and the forty hounds, is also a black man. You must contrive to meet him and say, in his own language: 'O brother, it is a long time since we have put down beer together and eaten lamb *kababs*. What do you say to an orgy?' He will answer that the cares of his kitchen prevent him from accepting, and will invite you instead to eat and drink with him at Dalila's expense. When you are in the khan you must try to make him drunk and then question him as to the quantity and quality of the food which he cooks for Dalila and her daughter, what sort of rations are given to the forty negroes and the dogs, where are the kitchen and the larder keys, and anything else that you may require to know. He will tell you all, being a babbler in his cups. As soon as you are abreast of his duties you must drug him with banj, dress yourself in his clothes, stick his kitchen knives in your belt, and go out with his provision basket to buy meat and vegetables from the market. On your return to the kitchen, you must take from the larder all that you need of butter, oil, rice and the like, and set about cooking the meals according to the directions which the real cook will have given you. You must mix banj with all the food and thus send the two women, the forty negroes, and the hounds into a deep sleep. After that you can strip them of their clothes and ornaments and bring all to me; but if you wish to obtain Zaynab as your bride, I advise you also to remove the forty-carrier-pigeons and bring them here in a cage."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALI QUICKSILVER CARRIED his hand to his forehead for sole answer and went out without a word to look for the negro cook. He found him in the market and, after saluting him, invited him to get drunk on beer; but the cook excused himself because of his duties and asked Ali to accompany him to the khan. When they arrived, Quicksilver followed Hassan's instructions to the letter and as soon as the cook was drunk, asked him about that day's meals. "My brother," answered the cook, "every day I prepare five courses, different in form and colour, for the midday meal of my mistresses, Dalila and Zaynab; and in the evening, five more. Today they have ordered two extra courses. I am going to give them lentils, peas, a good soup, mutton stew, and a rose sweet; the extra dishes will be rice with honey and saffron, and pomegranate pulp prepared with blanched almonds, sugar and flowers." "How do you usually serve your mistresses?" asked Ali, and the other answered: "I set a separate cloth for each in different rooms. I have a deal to do; for the forty guards must have boiled beans fried in butter with chopped onions, and flagons of beer; also there are three ounces of meat for each of the dogs to supplement the bones from the meal of the two women."

As soon as Quicksilver had learnt these things he mingled banj with the cook's drink and the man was soon snorting on the floor like a black buffalo. Ali took the keys from where they hung on a nail and, recognising the one which opened the kitchen by the

feathers and onion skins which clung to it, and that which gave access to the larder by its coating of butter and oil, opened the doors of both these places. Then he went out and bought the necessary provisions. His first care on returning was to follow the cook's cat about, until he knew the whole khan as if he had lived there all his life. When he was sure of his way he cooked the various courses, mixing banj with all, and served Dalila, Zaynab, the negroes and the dogs, without one of them noticing anything strange about the cook or the cooking.

As soon as Ali Quicksilver saw that every living creature in the khan, except the cat, had fallen into a deep sleep, he undressed the old woman and found her body detestable in its ugliness. Possessing himself of the official costume and helmet, he entered Zaynab's room and stripped her naked. He found her altogether desirable, clean, cared for, and sweet smelling; but, being a very honest man, he would not open her treasure without permission and contented himself with gazing long upon her and imagining his future pleasures. He took stock of the consistence of her flesh, its velvet tenderness and sensibility; in order to be sure of the last quality, he tickled the soles of her feet and was quite satisfied with the violent kick which he received in return. After that, he added the clothes of the negroes to those which he had already taken and then, mounting to the terrace, put all the pigeons into a cage and, laden with his booty, walked calmly forth, without even bothering to shut the doors. He carried all to Ahmad's house, where the Pest was waiting for him, and when he displayed the booty Hassan marvelled at his skill and promised to help him as far as he was able to win Zaynab as a bride.

Dalila-the-Wily was the first to wake from her

drugged sleep. It was some time before she completely recovered her wits; but as soon as she realised that her food had been tampered with, she jumped to her feet and hurrying into her woman's clothes, ran up to the pigeon loft which she found entirely empty. Next she descended to the courtyard where she saw the dogs stretched out as if they were dead, each in his kennel. A hasty visit to the guards' barrack showed her the forty and the cook lying insensible. Lastly, bubbling with anger, she came to Zaynab's room and found the girl sleeping naked, with a paper tied round her neck by a thread. On the paper was written: "I, Ali Quicksilver of Cairo, the brave, the generous, the noble and the skilful, I, and none other, have done this thing." As soon as she had read, she cried aloud: "If he should have taken it upon himself . . .!" and fear for her daughter sat mightily on her shoulders. When, to her great relief, she discovered that Ali had conducted himself honourably, she made the girl smell at a counter-banj and as soon as she came to herself, informed her of what had happened. "My daughter," she said, "you should have some gratitude to this Quicksilver for not having stolen much more when he could easily have done so. Instead of robbing your charms, he contented himself with stealing all the pigeons belonging to the khalifat; but what are we to do now?" She sat in thought for some time and then, telling Zaynab that she would not be long gone, hurried to Ahmad's house and knocked at the door.

Hassan-the-Pest cried: "That is Dalila-the-Wily; I recognise her knock. Go and open the door, Quicksilver." Ali hastened to let the old woman in and she entered the hall with a broad smile, bowing to all who were present. Hassan, Ahmad and the rest were seated round a cloth on the ground, eating a meal of

roast pigeons, radishes and cucumbers. The Pest and the Moth rose in Dalila's honour, saying: "O mother of all that is spiritual, sit down and eat pigeons with us. We have left some for you." Dalila saw the world go black before her eyes, and cried: "Are you not ashamed to have stolen and roasted those birds which the khalifat prefers to his own children?" "Who has been stealing the khalifat's pigeons?" they asked; and she answered: "That Egyptian yonder, Ali Quicksilver." At this Ali spoke up, saying: "O mother of Zaynab, when I roasted these pigeons I did not know that they were carriers. Here are some of them back at all events." Dalila pulled a wing from one of the roast birds which he handed to her and put it to her lips; but when she had taken one bite, she cried: "As Allah lives, my pigeons are alive, for this is not their flesh! I fed mine on musk-scented grain and would surely know the smell and taste of them."

All the feasters burst out laughing, and Hassan said: "Your pigeons are safe with me; and I am very willing to give them back on one condition." "Speak, O Hassan," answered Dalila, "I consent to your condition in advance, for I am altogether in your hands."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID HASSAN: "If you would have back your pigeons, you have only to grant the desire of the first of all our lads, Ali Quicksilver of Cairo, who wishes

to marry your daughter, Zaynab." "It will be an honour for me and mine," she answered, "but I cannot force my daughter to marry against her will. First give me back my pigeons; for it is rather by gallantry than by sharpening that my daughter is to be won." At a nod from Hassan, Ali gave the cage to Dalila, who thanked him, saying: "If you really wish to take my daughter in honest marriage you must not address yourself to me but to my brother, Zurayk, the fried fish merchant, who, besides being her uncle, is her legal guardian. Neither of us can do anything without his consent, but I promise that I will speak for you to Zaynab and intercede for you with Zurayk."

Dalila returned laughing to her daughter and told her of Ali's proposal. "Mother," answered the girl, "I am not averse to the match, for Quicksilver is handsome and well mannered; also he behaved well in not breaking that which he could have broken while I slept." "Nevertheless, my child," observed Dalila, "I think that before he obtains the consent of your uncle Zurayk, he will break an arm or so, and a leg or so, and perhaps even lose his life."

When they were alone, Ali Quicksilver asked Hassan-the-Pest to tell him something of this Zurayk and where his shop might be found. "My son," said Hassan, "now that we know that you have to get the permission of that strange old man, it would as well for you to renounce all hopes of the fair Zaynab. For you must know, Ali, that though Zurayk is now a fried fish seller, he was once a chief in the great trade, known throughout all Irak for exploits which far surpassed yours and mine and those of our brother, Ahmad. He is so subtle a practitioner that, without leaving his seat, he can pierce through mountains, steal the moon out of the sky as if it were a silver coin, and rob the

bright eyes of the stars of the nightly kohl which may be supposed to lie about them. There is no one in the world equal to the malice of him or to come near the fertility of his invention. It is true that he is settled down now and has exchanged the leadership of a robber band for a fried fish shop, but not one of his talents has been allowed to rust. To give you an idea of the old rascal's efficiency I have only to tell you of the last scheme he has hit upon to advertise his shop and find a ready sale for his fish. He has hung up by a silk cord in the entrance of his shop a purse containing a thousand dinars which is his whole fortune, and has had this announcement made by public crier throughout the markets: 'Give ear, O prigs of Irak, O Baghdad crooks, O desert cutters, O Egyptian cracks! Give ear, Ifrits and Jinn of the air and the earth and the sea! Whoever can lift the purse hung in the fried fish shop of Zurayk may keep it and no questions asked!' You can easily understand that, since this announcement customers have thronged the shop and bought fish while trying to steal the purse, but the cleverest of them has not succeeded, because Zurayk has installed an elaborate mechanism in his shop connected with the purse by an invisible thread. The lightest touch upon the purse sets off an astonishing system of bells and rattles, so that even if Zurayk is at the back of his shop or serving a customer, he has plenty of time to prevent the theft. He only has to stoop down and pick up one of a heap of lead buns which are always handy and throw it at the experimenter, who seldom gets off without a broken limb or a cracked head. You can understand now, Ali, why I counselled you not to move in this matter. If you tried to practise against such a man as Zurayk you would be walking, as it were, to your own funeral. If I were

in your place I should forget Zaynab, for to forget is the beginning of happiness and a man who has forgotten can live without the thing which he forgets."

In spite of Hassan's prudent advice, Ali Quicksilver exclaimed: "No, as Allah lives, I could never forget that dark-eyed and most sensitive girl! It would be shameful in a man like me. I must try to lift the purse and thus force the old bandit to give consent to my marriage in order to get it back." Thinking that there was no time like the present, Ali bought a selection of female garments and, when he had dressed himself in them, lengthened his eyes with kohl and put henna on his fingers. When he had modestly wrapped a silk veil about his face, he walked up and down the room experimentally, with such movements of the hips as women use and succeeded to a marvel in his imitation.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN ALI FELT that he had mastered the intricacies of female deportment, he sent out for a sheep and, when it was brought cut its throat and collected the blood. Then he filled the stomach with the blood and fastened it over his own belly under the clothes, so that he had the appearance of a pregnant woman. Next he killed two fowls and filling their gizzards with warm milk, arranged them in his bosom so that he appeared to have the vast breasts of a woman who is about to bear. To make all perfect, he wetted a con-

siderable number of napkins with starch and wrapped them one after the other about his backside; so that, when they were dry, he had a mountainous and solid bottom, well suiting with the part he had to play. Thus transformed, Ali went out into the street and began to walk slowly towards Zurayk's shop, hearing men cry as he passed them: "By Allah, what a bum!"

Before he had gone half way he found himself greatly inconvenienced by the starched napkins, so he hailed a passing donkey-boy and mounted his ass with a thousand precautions, in order not to burst the bag of blood or the milky gizzards. When he came in front of the shop he saw the purse hung in the entrance and Zurayk frying fish with one eye on his task and one on the door. "O ass-man," said Quicksilver, "my nose is sensible of those fried fish and the desire of my pregnancy yearns mightily towards them. Run and buy me one to eat now or I shall certainly miscarry in the open street." The ass-man at once halted his animal and called to Zurayk: "Give me a fried fish quickly for this pregnant woman; the smell of the frying has awakened the child in the womb so that it leaps and threatens to come forth." "Wait a little," answered the old rascal, "for the fish are not yet cooked to a turn and if you cannot wait, let me see your back." "Give me one of those from the counter," said the ass-man; but Zurayk answered: "Those are not for sale"; and without paying any more attention to the boy who helped his passenger to dismount and lean against the counter, went on turning the fish in his pan and singing:

*Ah, ah, the delicate flesh,
Little birds flying under the sea,*

*Until they are caught in a mesh, a mesh,
And bought and brought to me!*

*The oil is a lover who gilds them with gold,
Amorous is the dish;
And the lust of my belly can not be told
For the crisp, gold, delicate fish!*

Even as Zurayk was singing, the pregnant woman uttered a great cry, while a stream of blood poured from beneath her garments and drowned the shop. "Oh, oh, ah, oh!" she groaned, "Oh, the fruit of my bowels! Ah, my back is breaking! Oh, dear, my thighs! Oh, ah, my little, little child!"

"You calamitous old fool," cried the ass-man, "see what you have done! I warned you! Your refusal has made her miscarry; you are responsible to Allah and to her husband!" Zurayk, who was a little startled by this accident and feared to be polluted by the blood which was pouring from the woman, escaped to the back of the shop, out of sight of the purse. As quick as light, Ali stretched forth his hand; but no sooner had he touched the silk than a deafening discord of rattles, bells and old iron sprang up in every corner of the shop and Zurayk, running forward, saw Ali's outstretched hand and understood all in a flash. Seizing one of the lead buns, he hurled it at Quicksilver's belly, crying: "Take that, you gallowsbird!" The heavy lump was cast with such violence that Ali rolled out into the middle of the road, all encumbered with his napkins, and lay half-dead in a mess of blood and milk. He had just strength enough to drag himself to Ahmad's house, while the passers-by collected round Zurayk's shop, crying: "Are you a merchant or a professional swashbuckler? If you are a fried

fish seller, conduct your trade less violently. Take down that tempting purse and spare honest folk your malice." "Certainly, certainly; and anything else?" answered Zurayk with a grin.

When Ali Quicksilver had recovered from the blow in the belly, he found himself still determined to win Dalila's daughter. After he had washed, he disguised himself as a groom and, taking an empty napkin and five pieces of copper money in his hand, returned to Zurayk's shop to buy fish.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE HANDED the five coins to Zurayk, saying: "Put the fish in my napkin." "Certainly, master," answered Zurayk, and would have served the groom with some of his fish from the counter, but the groom said: "I want it hot." "The fresh is not yet cooked," replied the merchant, "wait a little while I blow up the fire," and with that he retired to his back shop.

Quicksilver at once stretched out his hand to the purse, but the attempt was greeted by a thunderous concert of bells, rattles, buzzers and old iron. Zurayk leapt with one movement to the front of the shop and, seizing a lead bun, threw it with all his might at the head of the pretended groom, crying: "Do you think I did not recognise you, you old bugger; you with your napkin and your money?" This time Ali was more wary and, ducking his head, ran from the shop,

while the heavy lump of lead landed in the middle of a tray filled with basins of curd which the kadi's slave was carrying on his head. The curds sprayed out and fell all about the face and beard of the kadi, covering his robe and turban, so that the crowd round the shop cried out: "This time, O Zurayk, the kadi will pay you interest on the money in your purse! And serve you right, you swashbuckler!"

When Ali Quicksilver reached Ahmad's house he told him and the Pest of his second fruitless attempt, and then, since his love for Zaynab would not permit him to relinquish the quest, he disguised himself as a snake-charmer and thimble-rigger and returned to Zurayk's street. Sitting on the ground outside the shop he drew three large puff-necked tongue-darting snakes from his bag and began to play the flute to them, varying his performance sometimes with feats of sleight of hand. Suddenly he threw the largest snake into the middle of the shop, where it fell at Zurayk's feet and so frightened him that he ran yelling to the back. Quicksilver jumped towards the purse and would have taken it, but Zurayk in spite of his terror was keeping one eye on his possession; with a double movement, the merchant smashed in the snake's head with one of his lead buns and threw a second with all his force at Ali, who again ducked and fled, while the missile fairly caught an old woman who was passing and hurried her into the peace of Allah. On this the neighbors cried: "Such conduct is not lawful, O Zurayk; if you do not take down that calamitous purse, we will confiscate it by force. Your evil humour has unfortunate results." "I consent," answered Zurayk, and, much against his will, he took down the purse and carried it to his own house, where he deemed that it would be safer from Ali Quicksilver.

This Zurayk was married to a negress, one time the slave of Giafar Al Barmaki and afterwards freed by the generosity of that great man. She had borne Zurayk a man child whose circumcision was about to be celebrated; therefore, when her husband handed her the purse, she said: "This is unusual generosity, O father of my son. I shall now be able to celebrate the little one's circumcision in a fitting manner." "Do you think I have brought you the purse to empty on celebrations?" said Zurayk, "As Allah lives, I had no such intention. Go and hide it under the kitchen floor and then come up to bed." The negress went down and dug a hole in the kitchen floor, then, after burying the purse, she returned to lie down at Zurayk's feet. The merchant was soon lulled to sleep by the heat of his wife and dreamt that he saw a great bird digging in the kitchen floor with his beak, uncovering the purse, and flying off with it in his talons. He woke with a start, crying: "O mother of my son, the purse is being stolen! Run to the kitchen!" The negress rose from sleep and ran down to the kitchen with a light, where she saw no bird indeed, but a man disappearing through the open door with the purse in his hand. The thief was none other than Ali Quicksilver, who had followed Zurayk home, and, hiding behind the kitchen door, had succeeded at last in bearing off the coveted prize.

When Zurayk heard of the loss, he cried: "As Allah lives, I will get it back this very evening!" Then said his wife: "If you do not recover it, I shall not open the door and you can lie in the street."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZURAYK WENT SWIFTLY by side streets and came before Ali to the house of Ahmad, where he knew the thief to lodge. He opened the door with the help of an arsenal of keys which he always carried and, shutting it after him, waited silently behind it. Soon Ali came and gave his customary knock. "Who is there?" asked Zurayk, counterfeiting the voice of Hassan-the-Pest. When Ali had answered that it was he, Zurayk said through the door: "Have you got the purse of that old rascal Zurayk?" "I have," answered Ali; then said Zurayk: "Thrust the purse under the door before I open, for I have made a bet with the Moth, of which I will tell you later." Quicksilver pushed the purse under the door and Zurayk, seizing it, climbed on to the terrace and, passing to the terrace of the next house, ran quietly down the neighbouring stairs, slipped through the door, and set out light-heartedly for his own house.

Ali remained long in the street but at last, as no one opened to him, he knocked violently on the door and roused everyone in the house. "It is Ali," cried Hassan. "Run, Camelback, and open the door." "And the rascal's purse?" asked the Pest ironically as soon as Ali entered his chamber. "Do not jest, good chief," answered Quicksilver, "you know very well that I passed it to you under the door." Immediately Hassan fell over on his backside, roaring with laughter. "O Ali," he cried, "your work is all to do again, for certainly Zurayk has taken back his own!" After a moment's reflection, Ali Quicksilver ex-

claimed: "As Allah lives, if I do not bring you back the purse this time, may I be ever held unworthy of my name!" Without an instant's delay he ran by side streets to Zurayk's house, and, arriving there before its master, gained access by the neighbouring terrace and entered the room where the negress was sleeping with her little boy.

He cast himself upon the woman and, after gagging and binding her upon her bed, turned his attention to the child. He contented himself with gagging the boy and fastening him in a basket filled with hot cakes which had been prepared for the feast of the circumcision. Then he stationed himself at the window and waited for Zurayk.

As soon as he heard knocking at the door, he cried out in the very tones of the negress: "Is that you, my dear? Have you recovered the purse?" "I have it here," called up Zurayk; and Ali continued in the wife's voice: "I cannot see it because of the darkness and I will not open the door to you until I have counted the money. Put the purse in the basket which I am going to send down to you." So saying, Quicksilver let a basket down from the window and drew it up again with the purse inside. Slipping the purse into his bosom and taking up the basket containing the little boy and the cakes, he escaped by the way he had come and soon delivered his triple booty into Hassan's hands. The Pest congratulated him and was proud of him; soon all the household were eating the cakes and cracking a thousand jokes at Zurayk's expense.

The fried fish merchant waited a long time in the street for his wife to open the door to him; but at last his patience was exhausted and he rained a volley of blows upon the door, which woke all the neighbours

and the neighbouring dogs, but elicited no movement from the house. Then he forced the door and, going up to the bedroom, saw what he saw. When he had freed his wife and heard from her what had happened, he beat himself in the face and tore out handfuls of his beard, as he ran towards Ahmad's house. It was already morning when he knocked at the door, and all the household was awake. Camelback showed the piteous fishmonger into the hall, where he was greeted with a storm of laughter. He turned towards Quicksilver, saying: "As Allah lives, you have fairly earned the purse, but give me back my son." The Pest answered for Ali, saying: "My child is ready to give you back your son and even your purse, if you will consent to his marriage with your niece, Zaynab." "Since when has it been the custom to force a consent in matters of this kind?" asked Zurayk: "Give me back the child and the purse, and then we will talk about marriage." At a sign from Hassan, Ali returned the child and the money, saying: "When will the marriage be?" "Softly, softly," replied Zurayk with a smile, "believe me, O Ali, I cannot dispose of Zaynab like a sheep or a bit of my own fish. I will consent to the match if you bring the dowry which the child demands and not otherwise." "I am ready to bring that dowry," said Quicksilver. "What is it?" Then said Zurayk: "Zaynab has sworn that she will never have her breasts pressed by anyone until he has brought her the gold robe, the gold crown, the gold belt, and the gold slippers of Kamaria, daughter of Azaria the Jew."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"IF THAT IS ALL," cried Quicksilver, "I am quite willing to resign all thought of marriage with Zaynab if I do not bring you the things this very evening!"

"That may prove to be a sorry oath, Ali," said Hassan-the-Pest, when Zurayk had departed, "I fear that you are little better than a dead man. The Jew Azaria is a powerful and malicious sorcerer with all the Jinn and Ifrits of the world at his command. He lives outside the city in a palace, the bricks of which are alternate gold and silver; but the place is only visible when the magician is in residence. As he leaves every day to carry on his usury in the city, the building disappears. Each evening when he returns, the Jew shows himself in the window and, displaying his daughter's gold robe on a gold dish, cries out: 'O all ye master criminals of Irak, Persia and Arabia, steal my daughter's garment if you can, and you shall marry her!' The most expert crooks among us all have tried the adventure much to our own distress, for the sorcerer has changed them into mules, bears, asses, or apes with one motion of his lips. I advise you to give up the enterprise and stay with us." "If I renounced my love for the most sensitive Zaynab, it would be great shame upon me," answered Ali, "As Allah lives, I will dress her in the gold robe on the night of our marriage; I will crown her with the gold crown, gird her with the gold belt, and set the gold slippers on her little feet."

He went out to find the shop of Azaria, usurer and magician, and when he came to it people pointed out the Jew to him. The old man, who was busy weighing gold in his scales, fastening it in sacks, and loading it upon the back of a mule which stood tethered near the door, was not only ugly but repulsive, and Ali was a little frightened by his face. Nevertheless, he waited until the Jew had completed his work and, after shutting the shop, rode off upon the mule; then he shadowed the animal secretly and came behind it beyond the city walls. Ali was beginning to ask himself if they were never going to stop, when the Jew halted and drew from his mantle a bag from which he took a handful of sand. Then he breathed on the sand and threw it into the air. Immediately there rose in that place a magnificent palace, the bricks of which were alternate gold and silver. It had an immense gate of alabaster and vast marble steps, up which the Jew rode his mule and disappeared. A few moments afterwards he opened a window and held out from it a gold dish containing a gold robe, a gold crown, a gold belt, and gold slippers. "O all ye master criminals of Irak, Persia and Arabia," he cried, "steal my daughter's garment and these other matters if you can, and you shall marry her!"

Ali Quicksilver, who was not lacking in sense, determined that his best course was to explain to the Jew how matters stood with Zurayk and ask him for the robe and other things as a present; therefore he held up his finger, crying: "I, Ali Quicksilver, the first of Ahmad's lads, desire to speak with you." "You may come up," answered the Jew and, when Ali had climbed up into his presence, asked him what he wanted. Ali told his story, adding: "Now I must

have this gold robe and the other things to give to Zaynab, daughter of Dalila."

The Jew laughed, showing his terrible teeth, and proceeded to cast Ali's horoscope at his sand divining table. "If life is dear to you," he said, "if you do not wish to be lost beyond recall, take my advice and renounce your project. Those who have egged you on to this adventure only wished you to meet the same fate as others who have tried before you. If I had not seen from the sand that your destiny is twined with mine, I would already have cut off your head." This cold advice set Ali in a flame of anger, so that he drew his sword and placed it against the magician's breast, crying: "If you do not give me all these things, if you do not abjure your heresies and pronounce the act of faith at once, you are a dead man!" The Jew stretched out his hand as if to pronounce the required words; but, instead, cried: "May your right hand be withered!" At once Ali's right hand withered and stayed useless in the air, while the sword dropped to the ground. Ali swiftly picked it up with his left hand and menaced the Jew again. "Let your left hand be withered!" muttered the old man and immediately the left hand dropped the sword and stayed withered in its place. Maddened by his helplessness, Ali made as if to kick the Jew in the belly with his right leg, but the other prevented him, saying: "May your right leg be withered!" Thereupon Ali's right leg withered where it was and he stood balancing upon his left.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ALI TRIED TO MOVE his useless members, but all he effected was to fall over and roll about the floor until he was worn out. "Do you renounce your attempt?" said the magician, but Ali answered: "There is no help for it; I must have the robe and the other things." "Indeed there is no help for it," replied the Jew. "As you want the things, I must put you in good shape for carrying them." So saying he sprinkled Ali with water out of a cup, muttering and saying: "Become an ass!" and Ali became an ass with the face of an ass, vast pendulous ears and new-shod hoofs. He brayed like an ass, lifting his muzzle and his tail on high and sniffing the air. The Jew made further conjurations to give himself complete mastery and then obliged the ass to go downstairs on its hind legs and stand in the courtyard, where he himself traced a magic circle in the sand, which at once rose to be a solid enclosure round the animal, from which there was no hope of escape.

Next morning the Jew saddled, bridled and mounted Ali, whispering in his ear: "We shall give my poor mule a rest." As they left the enchanted palace it disappeared into thin air.

Azaria rode to his shop and, after tying Ali, the ass, where he was used to tether the mule, began to occupy himself with weighing his gold and silver. Ali, who kept all the faculties of man save speech, was obliged to crunch the dry beans of his feed in order not to die of hunger; but, as a consolation, he discharged his black humour in a series of sounding farts right

in the face of the Jew's would-be customers. Soon there came to the Jew a young merchant who had been ruined. "I have no money," he said, "and yet I must live and earn food for my wife. Here are the last gold bracelets which remained to her; I will exchange them for their value in money, if you will give me enough to buy an ass, so that I can turn water-carrier." "First tell me," answered the Jew, "if you are ready to ill-treat the ass and make his life a burden if he refuses to work for you?" "As Allah lives," said the young man, "if he will not work, I will thrust my stick into his most sensitive parts and force him to do as I wish." Ali, the ass, heard all that was said and protested, as far as he was able, with a terrible fart; but the Jew said: "If you promise that, I will let you have my own ass in exchange for the bracelets. Do not spare him or he will get lazy; load him heavily, for he is young and solid enough." The man handed over the bracelets and led Ali away, while the poor beast said to itself: "O Ali, I am sure this new master will load you with a heavy wooden pack saddle and make you carry water-skins until your back is broken; I think that you are lost."

When the purchaser reached home he bade his wife go down to the stable and feed the ass. The woman, who was young and pleasant to behold, carried beans to the stable and would have put them in Ali's nose-bag; but the ass, after having looked at her out of the corner of his eye, sniffed the air furiously and butted her with his head so that she fell across the trough with her clothes in the air. The beast then got over her, licking her face with his great trembling lips, and making menacing movements.

The woman uttered such piercing cries that all the neighbours ran into the stable and, seeing how matters

stood, hastened to drive Ali from off the woman. When later her husband came and asked her what was the matter, she spat in his face, saying: "O bastard, could you find no ass in all Baghdad except this woman-harrier? Either you will get rid of the beast or we shall talk about divorce." "But what has the ass done?" he asked. "He tumbled me," she said, "and, if it had not been for the neighbours, would have certainly killed me." On this the young man gave the ass a good beating with his cudgel, and led him back to the Jew to whom he told the whole story. Azaria was obliged to return the bracelets, but, when the man had gone, he turned to the ass, saying: "You would play the wanton with women, would you? Wait a bit; since you are so fond of being an ass and cannot control your immoral caprices, I must find some other condition for you, in which you will be laughed at by great and small." So saying he shut his shop, mounted the ass, and rode out of the city.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AGAIN AZARIA CALLED his palace from the empty air and, after shutting the ass in its enclosure, muttered certain incantations over it and sprinkled water upon the brown back until Ali returned to his own shape. Then said the Jew: "Now will you take my advice and give up your foolishness, or must I turn you into something worse?" "As Allah lives," answered Ali, "since your fortune is twined with mine, I must

either kill you or take the robe from you and convert you to the faith of Islam." He leapt towards the sorcerer, but the latter stretched out his hand and threw in his face drops of water from a cup graven with talismans. "Become a bear!" he cried; and Ali became a bear, muzzled, fastened with a strong chain by an iron ring which pierced his nostrils, and already trained in dancing. "You fool," whispered the Jew in the bear's ear, "you are like a nut which has to be cracked before it can be used."

Ali spent the night fastened to a ring in the courtyard; but, when morning came, the Jew dragged him behind his mule to the shop and fastened him outside, while he went to attend to his gold. Poor Ali, the bear, heard and understood all that went on about him, but could not speak.

It was not long before a man, who was passing the shop, saw the bear and went into Azaria, saying: "My master, will you sell that bear? A doctor has prescribed bear's meat for my sick wife and bear's grease as a salve for her, but I cannot come by any." "Do you want to kill at once or will you be fattening the beast first to have more salve?" asked the Jew. "He is fat enough for my purpose," said the other, "I will have him killed today." "As it is a lady who is ill," cried the sorcerer joyfully, "I will give you the bear for nothing." The man haled Ali to his house and sent for a butcher, who soon appeared, and, after rolling up his sleeves, began to sharpen two great knives one against the other. Love of dear life gave Ali a double portion of strength, so that, when the folk would have rolled him over and cut his throat, he threw them off and, leaping into the street, ran to the magician's palace as he had never run in all his life before.

"I will give you one more chance," said Azaria when he saw the bear come back. He sprinkled Ali as before, until he returned to a man's shape, and then called his daughter Kamaria. The girl found Ali so handsome that her heart went out to him in violent love. "O beautiful young man," she said, "is it true that it is my robe you desire and not myself?" "It is true," answered he, "I need your things for the most sensitive Zaynab, daughter of that fine old woman, Dalila." This answer filled the girl with grief. "You see," cried the Jew, "he will not repent." So saying, he sprinkled Ali a third time with water from the talismanic cup, crying: "Become a dog!" At once Ali was changed into a slinking hound of the street and the magician spat in his face and kicked him out of the palace.

The dog, Ali, began to wander outside the walls, but soon, driven by hunger, he ventured into Baghdad. At once he was picked up by an immense outcry of all the dogs in the various wards through which he passed. Seeing that he was a stranger and yet ventured within those limits which they were guarding, they ran after him and chased him out of their domains with terrible biting. The poor intruder was bundled from one territory to another at the teeth of his fellows, until at last he fled into an open shop. The owner of this shop, who was a dealer in second-hand goods, took up a stick as soon as he saw the unhappy hound run in with his tail between his legs, fleeing from a whole furious army of other dogs, and laid about him among the pursuers with such a will that they fled howling. Then the dog, Ali, lay down at the man's feet with tears in his eyes and gratefully began to lick his hand with many waggings of the tail. "Better be a dog than an ape, or something worse,"

he said to himself and, when evening came and the dealer shut his shop, he kept close to the man and followed him to his house.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NO SOONER HAD Ali followed the dealer into the house than his daughter covered her face, crying: "O father, what is this that you do, to bring a strange man into the presence of your daughter?" "What strange man?" said the dealer, "There is only a dog here." "But that dog," she answered, "is none other than Ali Quicksilver of Cairo, who has been magicked by Azaria, the Jew Sorcerer, because of the robe of Kamaria." "Is that true?" asked the dealer, turning to the dog; when Ali nodded "Yes" with his head, the girl went on: "I am ready to bring him back to his human shape if he will consent to marry me." "As Allah lives," cried the dealer, "bring him back now and he will surely marry you!" Then turning to the dog he said: "Do you consent?" Ali wagged his tail and nodded his head again; at once the girl took a talismanic cup filled with water and was about to speak words of conjuration over it when a loud cry was heard and a young slave belonging to the house ran into the room. "What of your promise, my mistress?" she said. "What of the pact between us? When I taught you sorcery you undertook never to perform a magic operation without consulting me. I also want to marry young Ali Quicksilver, who is

before us in the likeness of this dog, and I will never consent to the changing of him unless he belongs after it to the two of us in community and passes alternate nights with each." The dealer's daughter consented to this arrangement and, when her astonished father asked how she had learnt sorcery, answered: "I learnt from our new slave, who had herself acquired the knowledge when she was in the service of the Jew Azaria and could peep secretly into the grimoires and old books of that redoubtable man."

Without more ado the two girls each took a talismanic cup and, after murmuring some Hebrew words over the water, sprinkled the dog Ali, saying: "By the power and merit of Sulayman, return as a man!" Ali Quicksilver leapt to his feet, younger and more beautiful than ever; but even as he did so, a second loud cry was heard and the door flew open to admit a young woman of marvellous beauty, who carried on her outstretched arms two gold dishes, one above the other. The lower dish contained the gold robe, the gold crown, the gold belt, and the gold slippers; the higher and smaller dish held the severed head of Azaria the Jew, bloody and with moving eyes.

This girl, who was none other than Kamaria, set the two dishes before Ali Quicksilver, saying: "O Ali, because I love you, I bring you those things of mine which you coveted and also the head of my father, the Jew. I myself have adopted the faith of Islam. There is no God but Allah! And Muhamad is the prophet of Allah!"

"You are a woman," answered Ali, "and yet you bring me a fine wedding present; therefore I am very ready to marry you at the same time as I marry these two on condition that I shall be free to give the things to Zaynab and take her to be my fourth wife, as the

law allows." Kamaria and the other two women consented to this arrangement and when Quicksilver had promised the dealer that he would take no concubines to fret his wives, he was allowed to depart with Kamaria's gifts and set out for Dalila's house.

On his way he saw a strolling sweetmeat seller of unusually short stature, who carried a tray on his head filled with dry conserves, *halwa*, and sugar-coated almonds. "I will buy some of these sweets to take to Zaynab," said Ali to himself. Even as he framed this determination in his mind, the sweetmeat seller halted, as if he had guessed his thoughts, and said: "Dear master, there is none in all Baghdad who can make carrot jam with nuts, to equal mine. How much would you like? But first taste a little piece and tell me what you think of it." Quicksilver took the morsel which was handed him, but no sooner had he swallowed it than he fell unconscious to the ground, for the jam was heavily drugged with banj and the sweetmeat seller was none other than little Mahmud Miscarriage who followed a lucrative trade along these lines. He had seen the rich present which Ali was carrying and had used this trick in order to steal them. The moment Quicksilver was stretched on his back, Miscarriage collected the presents intended for Zaynab and turned to flee; but he ran straight into the arms of the archers of Hassan-the-Pest who had seen the theft and galloped up in the nick of time. Miscarriage was forced to confess his crime and to point out the body lying on the ground. At once Hassan, who had been scouring all the wards of Baghdad for Ali Quicksilver, had counter-banj fetched and administered it to his unconscious friend. Ali's first cry on coming to himself was for the gold garments. Hassan showed him that they were safe

and congratulated him on his skill, saying: "As Allah lives, you surpass us all!" He led Ali to Ahmad's house and had him tell his story. "It is in my mind," said Hassan, "that the magician's palace belongs to you, since you are marrying Kamaria. We will celebrate the fourfold bridal there. I shall carry these presents to Zaynab at once and persuade her uncle Zurayk to consent to the match. I promise the old rascal will not refuse this time. As to Mahmud Mis-carriage, we can hardly punish him, as you are marrying into the family."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE PEST CARRIED the gold robe, the gold crown, the gold belt, and the gold slippers to the khan of pigeons, where he found Dalila and Zaynab feeding the birds. After greetings he begged them to fetch Zurayk and, when the fried fish seller had come, showed him the wedding presents which he had claimed as Zaynab's dowry. "You cannot refuse now," he said, "if you do, I, Hassan-the-Pest, will take the insult to myself." But Zurayk and Dalila gladly accepted the presents and gave their consent to the marriage.

Next morning Ali Quicksilver took possession of the palace of Azaria the Jew, and that same evening, in the presence of the kadi and witnesses on the one side and Ahmad-the-Moth with his forty and Hassan-the-Pest with his forty on the other, contracts were

written for the marriage of Quicksilver with Zaynab, daughter of Dalila, with Kamaria, daughter of Azaria, with the dealer's daughter, and the dealer's slave. A sumptuous feast celebrated the bridal, and all the women there declared that Zaynab was the most beautiful and had the most provocative eyes beneath her marriage veil. She wore the gold robe, the gold crown, the gold belt, and the gold slippers; the three other brides walked round her like stars about the moon.

On that night Ali Quicksilver tasted all the delights of Paradise in the arms of his wife, Zaynab, whom he found to be a pearl of rare virtue and beauty. On the ensuing three nights he consummated his marriage with the other three women who were also beauty in perfection. Ali likened his four wives to four precious gems, a diamond, a ruby, a pearl and a sapphire, each one peerless and beyond compare.

The feasting lasted for thirty days and thirty nights, and no expense was spared, until the guests were weary with laughing, singing, eating and drinking. As soon as they departed, Hassan went to Quicksilver and after renewed congratulations, said to him: "O Ali, the time has now come for me to present you to our master, the khalifat, that he may dower you with his favours."

An audience was granted to the two and, as soon as Haroun Al-Rachid saw young Ali Quicksilver, he felt his heart moved towards him because of his winning expression and great beauty. Pushed forward by the Pest, Ali first kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands and then, rising, whipped a piece of silk from a dish which Camelback handed him and exposed the severed head of Azaria the Jew.

"What head is that?" demanded the amazed

khalifat. "The head of your greatest enemy, O Commander of the Faithful," answered Ali, "the head of an evil sorcerer who could have destroyed Baghdad and all your palaces with a wave of his hand."

He told Haroun the whole story of his adventures from beginning to end, and the khalifat was so astonished that he instantly appointed him general supervisor of police, with the same rank, the same privileges, and the same emoluments as Ahmad-the-Moth and Hassan-the-Pest. "Long live all gallant fellows of your kind, O Ali!" said Al-Rachid, "Now ask me for something else." "I ask that the khalifat may live for ever," answered Quicksilver, "and also that I may send into Cairo, my native city, for my robber band, my forty old companions, that they may be my guards and make a train for me like those of my two colleagues." The khalifat gave his permission and also ordered the ablest of the palace scribes to make a careful account of this story and lock it in the archives of his reign, that it might serve as both instruction and amusement for the Mussulman people and all those who in the future should believe in Allah and in His prophet, Muhamad, the perfect man (upon whom be prayer and peace!).

They all lived the gayest and most delightful of lives until they were visited by the Destroyer of joy, the Separator of friends.

Such, O auspicious king, is the true story in all its details, of Dalila-the-Wily and her daughter Zaynab-the-Cheat, with Ahmad-the-Moth, Hassan-the-Pest, Ali Quicksilver, and Zurayk the fried fish merchant. But Allah (whose Name be glorified and exalted!) is wiser and sees further.

Then Shahrazade added: "But you must not think,

O auspicious king, that this tale is any truer than that of Juder the Fisherman and his brothers." And at once she told:

THE TALE OF JUDER THE FISHER- MAN OR THE ENCHANTED BAG

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once a merchant called Omar who had three sons: Salam the eldest, Salim the second, and Juder who was the youngest. He had brought them all up to manhood, but ever preferred Juder, which caused the other brothers to hate and envy the lad. When Omar, who was a very old man, noticed this hate, he feared that Juder might be ill-treated after his death by the other two. Therefore he called together the folk of his family and certain learned men whose business, under the kadi, was with inheritance, and said to them: "Let all my goods and the stock of my shop be brought before me!" This was done, and Omar continued: "Good people, I beg you to divide these things into four equal parts, according to the law." The goods were divided and the old man gave one fourth to each of his three sons and kept the last for himself, saying: "These possessions were all mine and I have divided them among my sons during my lifetime, so that after my death they will have nothing to claim from my estate or from each other. Thus discord will be avoided. When I am gone the part which I have kept is to go to my wife that she may be free to nourish herself."

Soon after this the old man died and at once Salam and Salim claimed part of Juder's inheritance, saying: "Our father's fortune has fallen into your hands."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

JUDER WAS OBLIGED to have recourse to the judges and to call those Mussulmans who had witnessed the division. These gave testimony and the judge forbade the two elder brothers to claim anything from Juder. The expenses of the suit deprived all three of a part of their inheritance; but this did not prevent Salam and Salim from plotting against Juder a second time, so that he was forced to go to law again and lose yet more of his possessions. The other two suffered equally with him, but they went before a third judge and then a fourth and then a fifth, until the fortune of each had disappeared and none of the three had enough to buy an onion and a crust.

The two brothers, being unable to batten upon Juder in their ruin, ill-treated, deceived and robbed their mother. The poor woman came weeping to Juder and began to curse her elder sons, saying: "They have stripped me of my all." "Dear mother," answered Juder, "do not curse them, for Allah will find them a reward. I cannot sue them for a recovery of your goods as all my fortune has gone in suits already. We must resign ourselves in silence; you shall live with me and my bread shall be your bread for ever. Bless me, mother, and then Allah will give me the means to care for you. Let the Great Judge see to my brothers and do you console yourself with the poet's words:

*Of all the avengers that there are
Time's the most bloodthirsty by far.
Also, a hill which overtops a hill
Is dwarfed by mountains greater still,
For such is Allah's will."*

Thus Juder calmed his mother and persaudded her to live with him. To earn their living he bought a fishing net and went every day to cast it in the Nile at Bulak, in the great pools, or in other water. Some days he would earn ten copper pieces, sometimes twenty, sometimes as much as thirty; so that he and his mother ate and drank well.

The two brothers soon had nothing left, for neither knew a trade and the money which they had stolen from their mother had been quickly dissipated. They were obliged to show themselves as naked beggars before their mother, humbling themselves in the dust and complaining of their starvation. A mother's heart is ever pitiful; the woman gave them crusts which were sometimes mouldy and fed them with the rests of yesterday's evening meal. "Eat quickly," she said, "and go before your brother comes back; for if he saw you here he might harden his heart against me and I be compromised." "As soon as they were fed they went their way; but one evening as they sat eating of their mother's bounty, Juder unexpectedly returned. In shame and confusion his mother bowed her head to the ground, but Juder smiled at his brothers, saying: "Be very welcome, O my brothers! What has happened to make you delight us at last with this eagerly expected visit?" He threw his arms about the necks of the two, and then continued: "It was not good of you to let me languish in the sadness of your absence. I had no news

of you at all." "As Allah lives, dear brother," they answered, "we also have longed for you, but shame for what had passed prevented us from coming. It was all the work of the Devil (whom Allah curse!), and now we have no other blessing but you and our mother." Touched by these words, Juder made answer: "I have no blessing but you, my brothers." Then said his mother: "My child, may Allah whiten your face and increase your prosperity, for you are the most generous of us all!" "Stay with me as welcome guests," said Juder to his brothers, "Allah has been good to me and there is plenty in the house for all." Thus he was reconciled with his brothers, who supped with him and stayed the night.

Next morning they ate together and then Juder set forth with his net, confident in the generosity of Allah, while the other two left the house until noon, when they returned to eat again with their mother. It was evening before Juder came home, loaded with meat and vegetables which he had earned by his fishing. The family lived together in this way for a month, Juder paying the expenses with his net and the other three eating and making merry.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY JUDER cast his net in the river and brought it back empty. The same thing happened again and yet again, so he changed his place and cast his net

into new water. It came up as empty as before, therefore he changed his place again and then a third time; but he had not caught a single gudgeon by sundown. "Are there no fish in the water," he cried, "or is there some other reason for this prodigy?" He took his net on his back in the gloaming and began to walk homewards sadly, torturing himself with the thought that his mother and brothers would have no food that night. His way lay past the baker's shop where he was accustomed to buy the evening bread, and he stopped with a sigh to watch the crowd of purchasers who surrounded the baker with their money. "Welcome, Juder," said the baker, "do you want some bread?" Then, as the fisherman remained silent, he exclaimed: "If you have no money, take what you want; I will give you time to pay." "Give me ten coppers' worth of bread," answered Juder, "and take my net as a pledge." "No, no," said the baker, "the net is your means of livelihood. If I take it I should be shutting the door of your sustenance. Here are the loaves and also ten coppers to buy other food. Tomorrow you can bring me twenty coppers' worth of fish." Juder thanked the man heartily and bought himself meat and vegetables, saying: "Allah will pay my debts for me tomorrow and drive my cares away." That night his mother cooked the meal as usual and Juder ate and slept.

Next morning he went forth fasting and fished until noon, without catching anything. He had not the heart to try further and so took up his net and made for home. The baker saw him and gave him more bread and ten coppers, saying: "Take this and go your way. If luck has deserted you today, it will return tomorrow." Juder would have excused himself, but the baker exclaimed: "Do not say a word about

it. If you had caught anything today you would have paid me. I am ready to give you the limit of credit; therefore come tomorrow without shame if you are not successful."

On the next day Juder caught nothing and was obliged to accept the baker's offer. The same mischance followed him for seven further days and, at the end of that time, he said in the agony of his heart: "Tomorrow I will go and fish Lake Karun; perhaps my destiny awaits me there."

Next morning Juder journeyed to Lake Karun, which is not far from Cairo, and was about to cast his net when he saw a Moor coming towards him on a mule. The man was dressed in a very beautiful robe and was so muffled with his burnous and head-wrappings that only one of his eyes was to be seen. The mule was as richly decked as its master, with silk and gold brocade, and on its rump bore a saddle-bag of coloured linen.

The Moor alighted from his mule, saying: "Greeting, O Juder son of Omar!" "Greeting, O pilgrim!" answered Juder. Then said the Moor: "I have need of you. If you will obey me, it will be to your great advantage; you shall be my friend and have charge of all my affairs." "Good master," replied Juder, "tell me what you have in your mind and I will obey you without reservation." "First recite the opening chapter of the Koran," said the Moor; and Juder recited it. Then the stranger took certain silk cords from his bag, saying: "O Juder, son of Omar, you must tie my arms behind me with these cords as tightly as you can; then you must throw me into the lake and wait. If my hand comes up out of the water before my body, cast your net and bring me to the shore; but if my foot emerges first, you may know

that I am dead. In that case take the mule with the bag and enquire in the market for one Shamaya, a Jew. He will give you a hundred dinars for the animal; and your sole remaining duty will be to keep the secret."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT ONCE JUDER tied the Moor's arms, pulling tightly and more tightly at the man's request, and then lifted him up and threw him into the lake. After a certain time two feet came to the surface and he understood that the man was dead. Without taking further thought for the body, Juder rode the mule to the market and found the Jew sitting at the entrance of his shop. "There can be no doubt that the man has perished!" cried the merchant when he saw the mule, "It was greed which killed him." He paid a hundred dinars for the beast and then dismissed Juder with a recommendation to keep the matter secret.

The fisherman hurried to the baker and gave him a dinar, saying: "Here is what I owe you, my master." The baker made his account and assured Juder that the change would be good for bread on the two following days. Then Juder went to a butcher and a vegetable seller, giving each a dinar and asking them to give him credit for the change. When he reached home loaded with provisions he found his brothers famished and their mother counselling patience. The

three threw themselves upon the food like ghouls and ate all the bread, while they were waiting for the meat and vegetables to cook.

Before leaving the house next day Juder gave the rest of the gold to his mother, bidding her see that none of the three lacked for anything while he was away. He returned to Lake Karun and was about to cast his net when he saw a second Moor, much like the first, approaching in far more expensive garments upon a more sumptuously harnessed mule. The stranger dismounted, saying: "Greeting, O Juder, son of Omar!" "Greeting, O pilgrim!" answered the fisherman. Then said the Moor: "Did you see a man like me mounted upon a mule, when you were here yesterday?" When Juder, fearing to be accused of the man's death, denied having seen anyone the day before, the Moor answered with a smile: "Poor Juder, I know everything that happened. The man whom you threw into the lake, and whose mule you sold to the Jew for a hundred dinars, was my brother." "Since you know all that," retorted Juder, "why did you ask me?" "Because I have need of the same service as my brother," said the man; and at once drew other silk cords from his costly bag, repeating the instructions of his dead brother: "Fasten my arms tightly and throw me into the water. If my foot comes up first I shall be dead; then you may take the mule to the Jew and sell it for a hundred dinars."

Juder tied the Moor's arms and threw him into the lake, where he sank to the bottom. In a short time two feet came up out of the water and the fisherman said to himself: "He is dead and damned. Allah grant that a Moor be sent to me every day, that I may earn a hundred dinars!" When the Jew saw him re-

turning, he cried: "The second is dead! Such is the reward of overweening ambition." He gave a hundred dinars in exchange for the mule and Juder handed the whole sum to his mother when he reached home. "My child," cried the woman, "whence comes all this gold?" Her son told her what had happened and she became very frightened. "You should never return to Lake Karun," she said, "I fear these Moors for you." "It is with their consent that I threw them into the water," he answered, "It is foolish to bid me give up this trade, wherein I earn a hundred dinars a day as a professional drowner. As Allāh lives, I shall return to Karun every day until I have drowned the last Moor and there be no more such in all the world."

On the third day Juder returned to Lake Karun and waited by its edge until there came to him a third Moor, very like the other two but surpassing them in the splendour of his garments and the trappings of his mule. Another difference was that this man had a large glass jar on each side of his saddle-bag. "Greeting, O Juder, son of Omar!" said the Moor and Juder returned his salutation, thinking to himself: "How is it that all of them know my name?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"HAVE OTHER MOORS passed this way?" asked the stranger. "Two," answered Juder. "Where did they go?" said the other; and the fisherman replied:

"I tied their arms and threw them into the lake, where both drowned. I am ready to do the same for you if such an end is to your mind." "Poor fisherman," exclaimed the Moor with a laugh, "do you not know that the end of every life is fixed beforehand?" With this he got down from his mule and gave Juder silk cords from his saddle-bag with which the fisherman bound his arms. "I am in a hurry," said Juder, as he worked, "You may have complete confidence in my skill as a drowner, for I have had some practice." When he had thrown the third Moor into the water and seen him disappear he waited for his feet to come to the surface; but to his great surprise, two hands appeared instead, followed by the head of the Moor, who cried: "Catch me in your net for I cannot swim!" Juder threw the net over him and, dragging him to land, saw that he held in each hand a coral red fish. As soon as he got to his feet, the diver put one of the fish into each of the glass jars and after securely closing the vessels, put them back in his bag. Then he took Juder in his arms kissed him on the two cheeks with great effusion, crying: "As Allah lives, I would have died without you and never caught these fish!"

When Juder was a little recovered from his surprise, he said: "O pilgrim, if you really think that I have had a hand in your salvation and the taking of the fishes, my price will be the true tale of your drowned brothers, the red fish and the Jew Shaim-aya." Then said the Moor: "As you have guessed, the two Moors whom you drowned were my brothers; one was called Abd Al-Salam and the other Abd Al-Ahad. My name is Abd Al-Samad, and the man whom you take to be a Jew is a fourth brother, a true Musulman of the Maliki persuasion, whose real name is

Abd Al-Rahim. Our father, Abd Al-Wadud, was a powerful magician, thoroughly versed in every mysterious science. He taught the four of us magic, sorcery, and the art of both discovering and opening the most deeply hidden treasures; and we applied ourselves so well to his teaching that we were able in the end to hold the Jinn, the Marids, and the Ifrits at our command.

“When our father died, leaving us great possessions and incalculable riches, we divided in friendly fashion his gold, his various talismans, and his books; but over the possession of certain manuscripts we fell into a quarrel. The most important of these manuscripts was one entitled *The Book of Eld*, the worth of which may not be told; its weight in diamonds would not purchase a thousandth part of it. Our father had put the essential of all his knowledge into this work; it contains precise instruction of the place of every treasure hidden in the earth, with just rules for the solving of enigmas and the interpretation of signs.

“Discord had reached a high pitch between us when the venerable old man who had educated our father and taught him magic entered the house. This sage, whose name was The Very Profound Cohen, took the *Book of Eld* in his hand and said to us: ‘My children, you are the sons of my son and I cannot favour one before the rest. I therefore decree that the owner of this book shall be he who opens the treasure of Shamardal and brings me the celestial globe, the phial of kohl, the sword, and the seal-ring which that hoard contains. These things have extraordinary powers. The ring is guarded by a Jinni whose terrifying name is Thundering Thunder, and he who gets possession of it may front the powers of kings and sultans without a qualm and dominate the length and breadth of

all the world. The man who holds the sword may destroy armies with the bright flames which shoot forth from it. By means of the celestial globe a man may voyage to any part of the world without leaving his seat and visit all the lands of East and West. He has only to touch with his finger the place which he wishes to reach and the globe will turn until that land, with its people and strange sights, appears as if it were in the same room. If the possessor of this globe has any fault to find with the people of a land or of a city he has but to turn its equivalent on the surface of the globe to the rays of the sun and all the people there will be burnt up by a consuming flame. He who rubs his eyelids with kohl from the phial may see all treasures hidden in the earth. *The Book of Eld* shall belong solely to the one of you who opens this treasure; those who fail will have no redress. Do you accept these conditions?' 'O teacher of our father, we accept them,' cried the four of us, 'but you must remember that we know nothing of the treasure of Shamardal.'

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THEN SAID The Very Profound Cohen: 'The treasure of Shamardal lies in the power of the two sons of King Red. Your father tried to gain possession of the treasure, but King Red's two sons, whom it is first necessary to enslave, escaped from him when they were hard pressed and threw themselves into

Lake Karun, near Cairo, in the likeness of red fish. He came to me complaining of his failure, so I calculated the chances of the matter by astrology and discovered that the treasure of Shamardal could only be opened with the help and in the presence of a young man from Cairo, one Juder, son of Omar, a fisherman. This Juder may be met with by the banks of Lake Karun; only by him may that water be freed from enchantment; it is for him to fasten the arms of those who would go down into the lake and to cast them into it. The diver must contend against the two sons of King Red; if it is his fate to conquer and catch them, he will not drown and his hand will come first to the surface. In that case Juder must bring him to shore in his net. He who is fated to drown will come to the surface feet first and must be abandoned to his destiny.'

" 'We will try even at the risk of our lives!' three of us answered; but our brother, Abd Al-Rahim, refused the adventure. We therefore decided to disguise him as a Jew merchant and arranged that we should send the mule and the bag to him that he might buy them from the fisherman in case any of us perished in our attempt.

" 'You know what has happened since then. My two brothers perished in the lake, destroyed by the Red King's sons. I nearly died also in my struggle with them; but, thanks to a conjuration which I made in my mind, I was able to undo my bonds, to free the water from enchantment, and imprison the two red fish in the glass jars. These sons of King Red are powerful Ifrits and their capture is the first step towards the opening of the treasure of Shamardal. It is, however, absolutely necessary, according to the

horoscope cast by The Very Profound Cohen, that you should be present. Are you willing to come with me to a part of Maghrib, not far from Fas and Miknas, and help me to open the treasure? I will give you all that you ask and be your brother for ever in the sight of God. After the journey you may return joyfully to your own house."

"O my lord pilgrim," answered Juder, "I have a mother and brothers to support. Who will feed them if I consent to go with you?" "This is nothing but laziness," retorted the Moor, "but if it is really care for your mother which prevents you, you may take her a thousand dinars from me and my promise that you will return at the end of four months." At this talk of a thousand dinars, Juder cried: "I will carry the money to my mother at once and then most willingly set out with you." As soon as the Moor gave him the coins he hurried to his house and put them in his mother's charge, saying: "These thousand dinars are for the use of you and my brothers while I am away on a four months' voyage to Maghrib with an inhabitant of that place. Pray for me while I am gone and your blessing shall help me." "O my child," she answered, "it is a long absence and I fear for you." "Dear mother," he replied, "there need be no fear for one who is under the protection of Allah. Besides, the Moor is a very honest man." He went on praising the stranger until his mother said: "May Allah incline the heart of this excellent Moor towards you! Go with him, my son, and may he prove a generous companion."

"Have you consulted your mother?" asked the Moor when Juder returned to him. "Indeed I have," he answered, "she has prayed for me and blessed

me." Without delay the Moor took Juder up behind him on the mule and they rode from noon until late in the day.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MOVEMENT THROUGH the air made Juder extremely hungry and, as he did not see any provision in the bag, he said to the Moor: "My lord, I think that you have forgotten food for the journey." "Are you hungry?" asked the Moor; and when Juder answered that he was, stopped the mule and dismounted, saying "Give me the bag." Then, with the bag in his hand, he asked: "What does your soul desire, my brother?" "Anything," answered Juder. "In Allah's name, tell me what you would prefer to eat," said the Moor. "Bread and cheese," answered Juder. "Bread and cheese?" said the other with a smile, "That is scarce worthy of you. Ask for some excellent food." "Just now I would find anything excellent," answered Juder. "Do you like roast chicken?" asked the Moor. "As Allah lives, I do," answered Juder. "Do you like honeyed rice?" asked the Moor. "Very much," answered Juder. "Do you like tomatoed birds' heads? Do you like artichokes stuffed with parsley and colocasia? Roast sheeps' heads? Puffed barley with garnishment? Savoury vine leaves? Pastries? And such and such and such?" In this way he enumerated twenty-four

dishes, while Juder thought to himself: "Is the man mad? Or how is he going to give me these things when he has neither cook nor kitchen? I must tell him that his meal is long enough." Then aloud he said: "That is sufficient. Do you want to go on making my mouth water with all these things when you cannot produce one of them?" But the Moor with a murmured "Good appetite, O Juder!" plunged his hand into the bag and took out of it a gold dish on which were two roast chicken, piping hot; he dipped again and there appeared another gold dish filled with skewered mutton; and then came up, one after another, the rest of the twenty-four courses which he had suggested.

"Eat, poor friend," he said; but the astonished Juder cried: "My lord, surely before we started you must have put a little kitchen and many cooks in the bag?" "The bag is enchanted; that is all," answered the Moor with a smile, "It is served by an Ifrit who would, if we wished it, instantly bring us a thousand Syrian dishes, a thousand Egyptian, a thousand Indian, and a thousand Chinese." The two ate together until they were satisfied and then the Moor, after throwing away the remains and returning the gold dishes to the bag, drew from the other side a gold ewer filled with fresh cool water. After they had drunken their fill, made their ablutions, and recited the noon prayer, the Moor returned the ewer to the bag and the two continued their journey on the back of the mule.

"O Juder," said the Moor at length, "do you know how far we have gone from Cairo?" "As Allah lives, I do not," replied the fisherman. "In these two hours," the other went on, "we have covered a month's journey; for this mule is none other than a Jinnia, and usually achieves a year's travel in one

day. On this occasion, however, she has gone slowly, so as not to fatigue you." They continued on their way towards Maghrib, having all their needs supplied, morning and evening, by the magic bag. However complicated and extraordinary the food which Juder demanded, the bag was able to provide it, cooked to a turn, upon a golden dish. At the end of five days they reached Maghrib and entered the city of Fas and Miknas.

As they went along the streets many folk recognised the Moorish lord, and he was either greeting or giving his hand to be kissed all the way, until they came to a certain house and dismounted before it. The door opened to their knocking and on the threshold appeared a girl as bright as the moon, as beautiful and slender as a thirsting gazelle, who smiled a welcome at them. "Rahma, my child," said the Moor paternally, "open the great hall of the palace for us." Rahma went before them into the building, with such balancing of her hips that Juder's reason fled from its seat in his mind and he said to himself: "Surely she is the daughter of some king!"

Before entering, the Moor took the bag from the mule's back, saying: "O mule, return whence you came and the blessing of Allah be upon you!" Immediately the earth opened, received the mule into its depths, and closed again. On this Juder cried: "Praise be to Allah who guarded us while we were on the creature's back!" But the Moor said: "Why are you surprised, O Juder? Did I not tell you that she was a Jinnia? Enter now, and let us go to the great hall."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

JUDER FOLLOWED HIS host into the great hall, where his eyes were dazzled by the bright number of its ornaments, by the beauty of its silver lustres and hanging gold, and by the profusion of the gems with which it was studded. As soon as the two were seated, the Moor bade his daughter bring a certain packet and, when it was placed in his hand, drew from it a robe worth at least a thousand dinars, which he handed to Juder, saying: "Dress yourself in this and be our very welcome guest." Juder put on the robe and at once had the look of some king of Western Arabia.

Meanwhile, the Moor had been taking a multitude of dishes from the magic bag until he had arranged on the cloth forty various and different foods. "Put forth your hand and eat, my master," he called to Juder, "for this once overlook the poverty of our service as we do not yet know your tastes and preference in food. You have but to mention your favourite dishes and they shall be set before you instantly." "As Allah lives, O pilgrim," answered the fisherman, "I like every food and hate none. Do not ask my tastes, but give me all the dishes which come into your head. Eating is my one accomplishment and sole delight. I flatter myself I eat rather well." He did, in fact, eat well that evening and on the following days, without once seeing the smoke of a kitchen. The Moor had but to plunge his arm into the bag, while thinking of a dish, and bring it out served on a gold plate. It was the same with fruits and pastries.

For twenty days Juder lived in the Moor's dwelling, changing his robe every morning and finding each more beautiful and costly than the last.

On the morning of the twenty-first day, the Moor came to him, saying: "Rise up, O Juder, for this is the appointed day when the treasure of Shamardal shall be opened." The two went out together and, when they came beyond the city walls, there appeared two mules, which they mounted, and two black slaves who walked behind the mules. At noon they reached the banks of a certain river and dismounted. At a sign from the Moor, the two negroes led away the mules and then came back bearing a tent, carpets, and cushions, with which they made a comfortable camp. When all was prepared, they set the two glass jars, containing the coral-coloured fish, before the Moor and then, after serving a banquet of twenty-four dishes from the bag, disappeared into thin air.

As soon as he had eaten, the Moor set the glass jars on a stool and began to murmur magic words over them, until the two fish cried from inside: "We are here, O king of sorcery! Have mercy upon us!" He continued his conjuration and the fish their pleading until the two jars burst to pieces and there appeared two beings of human form who abashed themselves before the Moor, wailing: "Grant us pardon and safety, O powerful one! What is our fate to be?" Then said the sorcerer: "I will strangle you, I will burn you, unless you promise to open the treasure of Shamardal." "We will do so," they answered, "but first you must bring to this place one Juder, a fisherman of Cairo, for it is written in the book of Destiny that the treasure shall not be opened save in his presence, and that no other than Juder, son of Omar, shall enter into the place where the treasure

is." "Behold, the man of whom you speak is here!" answered the Moor, "He both hears and sees you." The two apparitions looked long at Juder, and then said: "The last difficulty is removed. We swear by the Name that you may count upon us." At this, the wizard allowed them to go about the business in their own way, and they disappeared beneath the surface of the river.

The Moor set two tablets of red carnelian upon a large hollow reed and, hanging a gold censer filled with charcoal above the tablets, breathed upon it until the charcoal became red. Then he sprinkled incense on the coal, saying: "O Juder, the smoke rises and I shall soon recite the beginning of my magic; but, as I may not be interrupted without great risk of thwarting the Power, I will first instruct you in all which you have to do to reach our end." "I am ready, my master," answered Juder.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID THE MOOR: "When I begin to say my magic over the rising smoke, the water of the river will lessen little by little and, in the end, dry up completely, leaving the bed exposed. Then you will see, in the slope of the bank, a gold door, as high as a city gate, into which are fixed two rings of the same metal. Go up to that door, tap lightly with one of the rings, and wait for a moment; then knock more loudly and

wait again; lastly, knock a third time very loudly and do not move. After the third knocking you will hear a voice cry from within: 'Who knocks at the door of the treasure and does not know how to loose the enchantment?' When you answer: 'I am Juder, son of Omar, the fisherman of Cairo!' the door will open and a man appear on the threshold with a sword in his hand. He will say: 'If you are truly that man, stretch out your neck that I may cut off your head.' You must stretch it out fearlessly; for then, even as he raises the sword above you, he will fall at your feet, a body without a soul. You will receive no hurt; but if you refuse, through fear, he will most certainly kill you.

"When you have broken the first magic, enter and you will find a second door on which you must knock once and very loud. Instantly, on the sill of it, will appear a rider menacing you with a tall lance. When he says: 'What brings you to this place, where neither man nor Jinni may set his feet?' you must answer by boldly baring your breast to the point of the lance. You will receive no hurt and the rider will fall at your feet, a body without a soul. But if you recoil he will kill you.

"You will come then to a third door which will be opened by an archer aiming an arrow at you from his bow; thrust your breast forward as a mark, and he will fall at your feet, a body without a soul. But if you hesitate he will kill you.

"Go further and, from a fourth door, there will leap out upon you a terrible lion with wide jaws and make as if to eat you. Put your hand into his mouth and he will fall dead at your feet, without having done you the least harm.

"The fifth door will be opened by a negro who will

ask you your name. Answer: 'I am Juder'; and he will say: 'If you are indeed that man, try to open the sixth door.'

"At the sixth door you must cry: 'O Jesus, command Moses to open unto me.' The door will swing wide and two enormous dragons leap upon you with open mouths, one on the right hand and one on the left. You must fearlessly stretch out a hand to each; before they can bite, they will roll powerless at your feet. But if you show fear, your death is certain.

"You will then knock at the seventh door and it will be opened by your mother. She will say: 'Be welcome, my son. Come near, that I may wish you peace.' You must answer: 'Stay where you are and undress!' 'My child, I am your mother,' she will say, 'You owe me respect, because I suckled and educated you. How can you think of setting me naked?' You must cry out on her, saying: 'If you do not take off your clothes I will kill you!' When you take down a sword, which you will find on the right hand wall, and bid her begin, she will try to move your pity. Be on your guard against her wheedling and, each time she takes off one of her garments, cry: 'The rest, the rest!' and menace her with death until she is quite naked. As soon as she has no more clothes, she will vanish.

"Then, O Juder, you will have broken all the charms and loosened the enchantments without hurt to yourself. It will only remain to pluck the fruit of your labour.

"To that end you must enter by the seventh door into a hall piled with ingots of gold. Pay no attention to these, but make straight for a little curtain-hung pavilion in the middle of the hall. Raise the curtain and you will find the great magician Shamardal sleep-

ing upon a gold throne. Near his head you will see a thing shining, round like the moon: that is the celestial globe. He will be girt with the sword, have the ring on his finger, and the phial of kohl hung with a gold chain about his neck. Take these four precious things without hesitation and bring them out of the treasure chamber to me.

“Have great care not to forget or disobey any one of my instructions; for, if your wit or courage fail you, I greatly fear the result.”

The Moor repeated his directions to Juder once, twice, thrice and yet again, until the fisherman said: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“I HAVE THE THING pat; but what man alive could confront the magic of which you speak or support these terrible dangers?” “Have no fear for that, O Juder,” answered the Moor, “The guardians of the doors are but phantoms. You can be quite easy for them.” Then said Juder: “I put my trust in Allah!”

The Moor cast fresh incense upon the coals and started to pronounce his conjuration. Soon the water of the river began to diminish little by little and the bed appeared, showing the great door upon the slope of it.

Without hesitation, Juder went down into the river bottom and, approaching the gold door, knocked three times in the manner prescribed. A voice from within cried: "Who knocks at the door of the treasure and does not know how to loosen the enchantment?" When he answered that he was Juder, son of Omar, the door opened and a man appeared on the threshold with a naked sword, crying: "Stretch out your neck!" Juder stretched out his neck and the man fell lifeless, even as he was in the act to bring down the sword. The other doors opened exactly as the Moor had predicted and each time Juder loosed the enchantment with great boldness. When his mother opened the seventh door and cried him welcome, he asked her who she was. "I am your mother, my son," she replied. "I carried you within me for nine months and gave you suck and brought you up." "Take off your clothes!" cried Juder; and the woman exclaimed: "You are my son! How can you tell me to strip naked?" "Take off!" said he, snatching the sword from where it hung. "If you do not undress, I will kill you." She cast aside some of her garments and then, as he still cried: "More, more!" gradually unclothed herself until nothing but her drawers remained. "O my son," she said in a shamed voice, "it was indeed lost labour when I reared you! Is your heart of stone that you would make me show my middle nakedness? Do you not know that this is forbidden and a sacrilege?" "You are right," answered Juder. "I allow you to keep on your drawers." Hardly had he said the words when the old woman cried: "Beat him, beat him, for he has drawn back!" Lusty blows fell on him like rain from the invisible guardians of the treasure and he had received a

thrashing which he would never forget in all his life before the unseen Ifrits had finished chasing him through the halls and shut the last door behind him.

When the Moor saw him thrown outside the door, he hastened to drag him from the water which was already pouring back into the river bed. He hauled him fainting to the bank and recited verses of the Koran over him until he came to himself. "Alas, alas, what have you done?" he asked. "I overcame each obstacle and broke the charms," answered the fisherman. "It was my mother's drawers which lost me all that I had gained and got me a thrashing such as has never been since the world began." "Did I not warn you that disobedience would be fatal?" said the Moor. "When you allowed the woman to keep on her drawers you did a wrong to me and a wrong to yourself. All is over for this year; we will have to wait for next year to renew our attempt. Until then you shall live with me." At a word spoken in the air, the two negroes appeared and, after folding the tent and clearing the camp, brought back the mules, upon which Juder and the Moor returned to the city of Fas.

Juder stayed as the Moor's guest for a whole year, receiving a costly new robe every morning and feasting of the best by means of the enchanted bag. When the day for opening the treasure came round again, the Moor led Juder outside the city, where they were met by the two negroes with the mules. As soon as they reached the river, the tent was pitched and a meal prepared. Then the Moor arranged the hollow reed, the carnelian tablets, the censer, and the incense, and said to Juder: "I have a piece of advice to give you." "My lord," cried the fisherman, "it is not necessary. I will only forget your excellent instructions of last year when I forget my thrashing."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"YOU ARE SURE that you remember?" asked the Moor; and when Juder answered that he did, went on: "Lift up your heart, Juder! Above all, do not imagine that the old woman is your mother; she is nothing but a phantom who has taken your mother's appearance to your harm. You came out alive the first time; but, if you make any mistake today, you will assuredly leave your body with the treasure." "If I make a mistake today," Juder replied, "I shall deserve to be burnt alive."

As soon as the Moor threw incense on the charcoal and began his spells, the river dried up and Juder went down to the gold door. It opened in the same way as before and he succeeded in loosening each enchantment until he came to his mother, who wished him welcome. "O hag," he answered, "since when have I been the son of such as you? Take off your clothes!" She undressed slowly, trying the while to soften his heart, but when only her drawers remained, Juder cried: "Remove them, O hag!" and, as they dropped about her feet, she vanished.

Juder penetrated the central hall without difficulty and, disregarding the vast piles of gold, walked up to the little pavilion and lifted the curtain. Even as the Moor had said, mighty Shamardal slept there on a gold throne, girt with the sword, wearing the ring, carrying the phial of kohl round his neck on a gold

chain, and having above his head the moon-round and moon-bright globe.

Juder undid the sword, pulled off the ring, unfastened the phial, took down the globe and started to retire. At once a musical sound of unseen instruments broke forth to acclaim his victory and the voices of the invisible guards cried: "Well done, well done, O Juder!" These sounds and voices only ceased when the fisherman found himself once more in the river bed.

As soon as he saw Juder come out with his burden, the Moor ceased from his fumigation and his spells, and, running towards him, clasped him to his breast. As soon as he received the four mysteries of the treasure, he called the negroes from the hollow air, who struck the tent and led up the mules.

When Juder and his host came to the palace and had eaten of a great banquet furnished by the bag, the empty dishes were returned, and Abd Al-Samad said: "O Juder, you left your native land because of me and have brought my business to a successful end. I owe you more than I can say; you have but to express a wish and Allah will grant it through my poor means. Have no false shame, for you have deserved greatly. "My lord," answered the fisherman, "I ask from Allah and from you only the enchanted bag." The Moor handed him the bag, saying: "You have earned it. Whatever you had asked, it would have been as freely given. But this bag will only help you in your eating and drinking. You have undergone dangers and fatigues with me and, according to my promise that you should return well-content to your own people, I ought to make you rich in more than foodstuffs. Take then this second bag filled with gold and jewels, so that you may become a great merchant

in your own country, satisfy your desires and those of your family, and never have a second thought in using money. . . . I will now tell you how to use the first bag. All you have to do is to plunge in your hand and think these words: 'Slave of the bag, I order you, by virtue of the Magic Names to bring me such a dish!' Instantly you will find whatever you have wished at the bottom of the bag, even were it a daily thousand dishes of different form and hue."

Abd Al-Samad called one of the negroes and one of the mules from the hollow air and loaded the beast with a second bag, one side bursting with coined and uncoined gold, the other filled full with jewels. On top of this he set the empty magic bag, saying to Juder: "Mount the mule! This black man will walk before you and show you the road until you reach the door of your own house in Cairo. When you are home, take the two bags, but return the mule to the negro who will bring it back to me. Never let a third person share our secret. And now farewell in the name of Allah!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"ALLAH INCREASE YOUR prosperity, my lord!" said Juder as he mounted the mule and set off in the wake of the negro. The animal faithfully followed its guide throughout the day and night and, as it was this time going at its fullest speed, the walls of Cairo were in

sight when the second morning broke. Juder entered his native city by the Victory Gate and, coming to his house, saw his mother seated upon the threshold with outstretched hand, asking an alms in the name of Allah.

Filled with a great anger at this sight, Juder threw himself from the mule and ran with open arms to his mother, who wept at the sight of him. When he had taken down the two bags and given the mule in charge of the negro, he led the old woman into the house and made her sit down upon a mat, saying: "O mother, how goes it with my brothers?" "It goes well," she answered. "Then why do you beg in the street?" he cried. "I left you a hundred dinars for my first drowning, a hundred for my second, and a thousand when I went away." "My child," she replied, "your brothers plotted against me and took all that money, so that I was obliged to beg in the street or starve." Then said Juder: "Dear mother, your sufferings are over now that I have returned. See, here is a bag full of gold and jewels; also food will not be lacking in our house." Smiling through her tears, she exclaimed: "My son, fortune was born with you. May Allah grant you His favour and increase His benefits upon you! Go and buy us a little bread, for I slept last night without having eaten, and this morning I have fasted." Juder laughed at the word bread, and answered: "You have but to ask for those dishes which you desire and you shall have them at once, without any buying in the market or cooking in the kitchen." "But, my child," said his mother, "you have brought nothing with you but these two bags; where is this food of which you speak?" "I have it," he answered, "so tell me your fancy." Then said she: "It does not matter what, so it can cure the

pains of hunger." "That is true," he admitted, "in necessity a man must be content with anything; but, when there is abundance of all, a choice of the delicate and delicious will not come amiss." "I would like a warm crust and a little cheese," she said. "That hardly suits with your degree, my mother," he objected. "Very well," she said, "you know better what is fitting. Tell me what we ought to have." Then said Juder triumphantly: "I would suggest lamb, roast chicken, and pimentoed rice; I would suggest sausages, stuffed vegetable marrow, stuffed mut-ton, stuffed ribs, a *kenafa* with almonds, bees' honey mixed with sugar, pistachio fritters perfumed with amber, and almond cakes." On hearing this seductive list, the poor woman thought her son was either making fun of her or had gone mad. "What is wrong with you, Juder?" she cried, "Are you dreaming or have you gone mad? What useful purpose do you serve by naming these astonishing and far-fetched dishes to your poor mother?" "I have not mentioned one dish which you shall not eat of this very moment," said he. "Give me the empty bag." She gave him the bag, feeling it by the way, and he drew from it a gold dish on which lay the sausages, moist, odorous, and swimming in their appetising sauce. Again and again he dipped, until all the dishes which he had suggested were ranged before his mother's astonished eyes. "My child," said the old woman, "the bag is very small; moreover it is always empty. What is the explanation of this thing?" "The bag is enchanted," he answered, "it was given me by the Moor. It is served by a Jinni who provides any dish which is asked for in this fashion." When he had told the old woman the formula, she asked whether she herself would be able to extract miraculous meals from the

bag. "Certainly," he answered; and at once she thrust her hand deep down in the bag, saying: "Slave of the bag, I command you by the virtue of the Magic Names to bring me a second helping of stuffed ribs."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT ONCE SHE felt a dish beneath her hand and drew it forth filled with a marvellously garnished rib, scented with cloves and fine spices. Then said she: "I still want my hot crust and cheese; I am used to it and cannot get it out of my mind." With that she repeated the invocation and got her bread and cheese. "Remember," said Juder, "that, when the meal is over, the dishes must always be put back in the bag, for that is a part of its magic. Keep the thing shut away and only take it out when you have need of its services. Also, never tell the secret to anyone; though, of course, you are at liberty to give food to the neighbours and poor folk, and may feed my brothers as freely in my absence as when I am here."

He had hardly made an end of these instructions when his two brothers entered the house and saw the superb feast spread about the cloth.

They had heard of Juder's return from a man, who said to them: "Your brother has come back from his travels on a mule led by a negro; no one ever saw the like of his rich clothes." "Would to Allah we had never despoiled our mother!" said Salam, "She

will surely tell him of our act and we be for ever put out of his favour." But Salim answered: "Our mother is very kind-hearted. Besides, even if she tells, our brother is more indulgent still. If we can think out any excuse for our conduct he will accept it." Thus it was that they decided to venture back to the house.

When Juder saw them, he rose in their honour and wished them peace, saying: "Sit down and eat with us." So they sat down and ate abundantly, for they were thin with starvation. "Dear brothers," said Juder when they were satisfied, "take what remains of these dishes and give to the poor of our district." "Would it not be better to keep the remains for supper?" they objected; but he laughed and answered: "When supper comes there will be as much and more." Reassured by this, the two went out and distributed the broken meats to the poor, saying: "Take and eat." Then they brought the dishes back to Juder, who handed them to his mother and bade her return them to the bag.

When the hour came for the evening meal, Juder took the sack and drew from it forty different dishes, which his mother arranged on the cloth. Then he invited his brothers to come in and eat. Later he provided them with pastries to sweeten the repast and, when all was over, bade them take the broken fragments and give them to the poor.

After ten whole days in which they had been provided with such feasts as they had never dreamed, Salam said to Salim: "Can you understand how our brother can serve us these fine meals every day, morning, noon, evening, and then pastries at night; such things as kings have on their tables? Even supposing that he has become very rich, the food must come from

somewhere, and then, we never see him buying it or lighting a fire or staying in the kitchen." "I cannot understand it," answered Salim, "but our mother will be able to explain the thing." Thereupon they concocted a plan and went in to their mother, saying that they were hungry. "You shall soon be satisfied," said she; and, going into the room where she had hidden the bag, returned with a hot meal. Then said they: "These things are cooked to a turn and yet you have not entered the kitchen or blown the fire." "I took them from the bag," she answered. "What bag is that?" they asked. "An enchanted bag," said she, and at once repeated the formula to them, begging them to keep it secret. "We shall not say a word," they answered; and tested the bag for themselves, each wishing for his favourite meat.

Next day Salam said to Salim: "How long are we going to live as servants to our brother Juder, eating each meal as an alms thrown to a beggar? Can we not find some way of stealing the bag and keeping it for ourselves?" "We need a plot," answered Salim. "That is not far to seek," continued the elder, "All we have to do is to sell Juder to the chief captain of the sea of Suez." "How can we do that?" asked Salim.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID SALAM: "We will go to the captain, who

is now in Cairo, and invite him to come to supper with us, bringing two of his sailors. You have only to back me up in the thing I have to say to Juder and you shall see what I can compass before the night is out."

The two sought the chief captain of Suez and greeted him, saying: "We come upon a matter which will rejoice your heart." "Good," said he, and they continued: "We are two brothers, and there is a third, a good-for-nothing. When our father died, he left us equal shares; but our brother soon exhausted his in corrupt and licentious expense. When he was ruined, he brought us unjustly before a bribed and iniquitous judge, saying that we had cheated him out of our father's goods; and the judge fined us all our fortune. Our brother was not content with this, however; he sued us a second and a third time, until we were reduced to utter want. Now he plots something else against us, we do not know what; therefore we have come to beg you to buy him from us and use him as a rower in one of your ships."

"Can you think of some excuse for bringing him here?" asked the captain, "If you can, I promise to have him speedily into one of my boats." "That will be difficult," they answered. "It will be better if you become our guest this evening and bring two of your men with you. When he is asleep the five of us can fall upon and gag him; then you will be able to carry him from the house, under cover of dark, and smuggle him on board." "I agree to that," said the captain, "Will you let me have him for forty dinars?" "That is very little," they replied, "but, as you are the purchaser, we consent. We will meet you at nightfall in such a street near to such a mosque. Do not forget to bring the two sailors with you."

They returned to their brother Juder and, after they had chatted with him for some time on one matter and another, Salam kissed his hand as if he had a favour to ask. "What is it you wish, my brother?" asked Juder; then said Salam: "I have a friend who asked me many times to his house while you were away, and entertained me generously. Today I visited him and he asked me to stay to dinner. When I told him that I could not leave you alone, he suggested that I should bring you with me. Then said I: 'I do not think he would accept; it would be better if you and your brothers dined with us tonight.' As the brothers were present I had to invite them, but I sincerely thought they would refuse; unhappily they made no difficulty and all three accepted, promising to meet me near the door of the mosque at the corner of our street. It is time that I was there, but I feel ashamed before you because of the liberty I have taken. I shall be obliged to you for ever if you will receive the men; but if, O generous brother, you do not wish to have these guests in the house, allow me to invite them to our neighbour's and wait upon them there myself." "But why ask them to a neighbour's house?" asked Juder. "Is our own so narrow and inhospitable? Have we no food to give them? My dear brother, let them come and they shall dine without stint of meat and sweet or any other thing. Another time, if you wish to have guests while I am absent, you have only to ask your mother and she will provide more than is necessary for your entertainment. A blessing will follow from such guests, O brother."

Salam kissed Juder's hand and went to the door of the little mosque, where he found the three men waiting for him. As soon as he brought them into Juder's presence the latter rose in their honour and, with

words of kind welcome, made them sit down beside him. He was far from knowing of what cruel destiny they were the instruments. At his request the old woman served a feast consisting of forty different-coloured dishes, and the guests ate their fill, thinking all the time that the splendid things came from the generosity of Salam and Salim. A third of the way through the night, pastries and sweets were set on the floor and eaten till midnight. Then, as Juder showed no signs of sleep, Salam gave an agreed sign, the sailors threw themselves upon the youngest brother, and, after thrusting a gag into his mouth, bound his hands and feet and carried him out of the house into the darkness. When they came to Suez they threw the unfortunate young man on board one of the captain's vessels and, putting irons upon his feet, condemned him to toil at the rowers' bench among the other galley-slaves.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE TWO BROTHERS, Salam and Salim, woke in the morning they went into their mother and asked her whether Juder had yet risen. "Go and wake him," she said. "Where is he sleeping?" they asked, and she told them he was sleeping in the guest-chamber. "There is no one there," they exclaimed. "Perhaps he went off last night with the sailors; we know that he has a taste for travel and we even heard the

stranger persuading him to go along with them to open certain hidden treasures of which they knew." "It is quite likely that he went with them without telling us," said the old woman. "We need not fear for him, for he was born lucky and surely Allah will send him back to us laden with riches." But then, as any absence wrings a mother's heart, she began to weep. "O wicked woman," cried the brothers, "you love Juder so much that if we were to go away or return you would neither weep nor rejoice. Are we not your sons as much as he?" "You are indeed my sons," she answered, "and two more wicked and ungrateful, woman never had. Since your father's death neither of you has been good for anything; not on a single day have I obtained happiness or consideration from either. But Juder was always good to me; he had a heart to please me, to respect me, and to feed me. He is worthy of my tears, for his benefits are still upon me and upon you, O ungrateful ones." At this the two vile fellows, after cursing and beating their mother, rummaged the house until they found the two bags. They took the gold and jewels from the second one, saying: "These things are our father's," but their mother cried: "As Allah lives, they belong to Juder; he brought them from the country of the Moor." "You lie," they answered, "for they are our inheritance which we have a right to spend as we choose." They divided the gold and gems into two equal parts, but fell into a quarrel about the enchanted bag. Then said their mother: "My children, the other bag cannot be shared or divided without the charm being broken. Leave it with me, and every day I will take out of it for you such dishes as you desire, contenting myself with the broken pieces. If you consent

to give me necessary clothes, it will be pure generosity on your part and not my due. But do not forget that you are my children, grant me this one favour: not to quarrel with or hurt each other, so that, when your brother returns, you need not fear to meet him." The two took no notice of her petition, but spent the night discussing and quarrelling over the magic bag in such loud voices that one of the king's officers, who was being entertained in the next house, heard all they said and understood the cause of the dissension in its details. Next morning he sought an audience of Shams Al-Daulah, King of Egypt, and told him what he had overheard. The king at once had the two brothers brought into his presence and tortured them until they confessed their crimes. As soon as he understood the whole matter, the king took the two bags for himself, threw the brothers into a dungeon, and made Juder's mother a pension sufficient to supply her daily needs. So much for them.

Juder had already been a year slaving at the oar in a ship belonging to the captain of Suez, when a tempest rose about the boat and dashed it again and again against a rocky coast until it was broken to pieces and all the men aboard drowned except Juder. He swam to shore and walked inland until he came to a camp of wandering Arabs who entertained him and asked if he were a sailor.

While he was giving them details of the wreck, a merchant from Jeddah, who happened to be passing through the camp, took pity on him, and said: "Would you like to enter my service, O Egyptian? In return I will furnish you with clothes and take you back with me to Jeddah." Juder accepted this invitation with alacrity and found himself generously treated when he

came to the merchant's native city. Soon after their arrival his employer went on pilgrimage to Mecca, taking Juder with him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY CAME to Mecca, Juder hastened to join the procession round the sacred enclosure of the Kaaba, in order that he might make the seven ritual circles about it. As he walked among the people he met his friend Abd Al-Samad, the Moor, who greeted him as a brother and asked his news. Juder told his story with many tears and at once the Moor led him to his own house and clothed him in a robe of unparalleled richness, saying: "Misfortune has now passed you by, O Juder." Then he cast the fisherman's horoscope and found from it all which had overtaken the two wicked brothers in the meanwhile. "They have been cast into a dungeon by the king of Egypt," said he, "but you are my welcome guest. Stay with me until we have performed the rites of pilgrimage and then we shall see to your fortune." "Dear master," answered Juder, "let me seek out the merchant who brought me here and ask for leave and goodwill to come to you." "You owe him money?" asked the Moor; and, when Juder shook his head, continued: "Go and ask his leave and goodwill then; for bread which is eaten has its obligations." Juder sought out the Jeddah merchant and told him that he

had found a friend who was dearer to him than a brother. "Bring him here and we will give a feast in his honour," said the merchant; but Juder replied: "As Allah lives, he has no need of feasts, being wealthy and well-served." The merchant then handed him twenty dinars, saying: "Take these and free my conscience of responsibility." "I free it," answered Juder and took his leave. As he was returning to the Moor's house he met a poor man on the road and gave him the twenty dinars; then he rejoined his friend and lived with him until all the obligations of the pilgrimage had been fulfilled.

Before leaving Mecca, the Moor gave Juder that ring which had formed part of the treasure of Shamardal. "It will realise your every wish," he said, "its slave is the Jinni Thundering Thunder; you have but to rub the bezel and he will appear, to do your will and bring you anything which you desire." By way of illustration he rubbed the bezel himself and at once the Ifrit appeared and bowed before them, saying: "Behold I am here, my lord! Command and you shall be obeyed, ask and it shall be given you. Would you rebuild a ruined city, or ruin a living one? Would you kill? Would you snatch the soul from a king, or only break his armies?" "O Thundering Thunder," answered the Moor, "behold your future master! Serve him well." Then he dismissed the Jinni and turned to Juder, saying: "Do not forget that this ring gives you power over all your enemies. I would not that you should ignore the extent of its magic." Said Juder: "If it be really so powerful, I very much wish to return to my native land." "Rub the bezel, then," said the other, "and the Jinni will take you there on his shoulders."

Juder said farewell to Abd Al-Samad, the Moor, and

rubbed the ring. When the Ifrit appeared, he said: "I wish to be in Cairo today." "That is easy," answered Thundering Thunder and at once, bending down, he took the fisherman upon his back and flew into the air with him. The journey started at noon and by midnight the Jinni had set Juder down in his mother's house and disappeared.

His mother rose, weeping, and wished him peace. Then she told him how his brothers had been beaten, imprisoned, and robbed of the two bags. "Do not concern yourself any more for that," answered Juder. "I will at once give you a taste of my power and bring my brothers back again." As he spoke he rubbed the ring and, when Thundering Thunder appeared, ordered him to free the two men from the king's dungeon and return with them.

Salam and Salim lay in agony on the damp floor of their prison, praying for death to deliver them. As they spoke bitterly of their sufferings, the earth opened beneath their feet and Thundering Thunder rose before them. Even as they fainted from fright he took them under his arms and disappeared into the deeps of the earth. When they came to themselves they found that they were lying on carpets between their mother and Juder, who were both caring for them. When Juder saw them open their eyes, he said: "All greetings, O Salam and Salim! Have you forgotten me, do you not know me?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEY BOWED THEIR heads and wept silently, but Juder said: "Do not weep. Satan and greed compelled you to act as you did. And yet how could you have had the heart to sell me? But do not weep. It is some consolation for me to think that I resemble Joseph in that matter, for he also was sold by his brothers; they even behaved worse to him than you did to me, for they threw him into a dry cistern. Ask Allah's pardon and He will forgive you, even as I forgive you, since there is no limit to His mercy. Above all, have no fear or constraint in my presence." He comforted them until their spirits were renewed; then, after telling them the story of his sufferings, showed them the magic ring.

"Forgive us this once, dear brother," said they, "and, if we return to our old practices, you may punish us in any way that you consider fit." "Do not think any more of it," he answered, "Tell me instead what the king did to you." They told him how they had been beaten and cast into prison; but, when they spoke of the confiscation of the two bags, he rubbed the bezel of the ring, saying: "We must see into this."

When Thundering Thunder appeared, the two brothers were terrified and thought that Juder had conjured him up to kill them. They threw themselves in front of their mother, crying: "We put ourselves under your protection, dear mother. Sweet mother, intercede for us!" "My children, do not be afraid," she said.

Then said Juder to the Ifrit: "Bring me all jewels and precious things which are in the king's treasury and, at the same time, return me the two bags which were taken from my brothers." The Jinni disappeared and returned almost instantly with all the king's treasures and the two bags, which were quite unharmed. "My lord, I left nothing in all the treasury," he said. Juder put the bag of treasure and all the wealth of the king into his mother's charge; but kept the food bag by his side. "Slave of the ring," he said, "I order you to build me a tall and splendid palace in the night, to paint it with liquid gold, to carpet and furnish it beyond the manner of kings. The work must be completed by tomorrow's dawn." "Your will be done!" answered Thunder and disappeared into the earth, leaving Juder to feast himself and his family from the enchanted bag.

The slave of the ring called together his companions of under earth and, choosing out the most skilful builders from among them, set these busily to work. Some shaped the stones, others set them up, others coloured them, others graved them with figures, others carpeted and furnished the halls when they were made; so that by the dawn the palace stood splendid and complete. The slave of the ring came and stood before Juder, saying: "My lord, will you come and see your palace, for it is finished." Juder took his mother and brothers with him and they all examined the palace and found that it was without equal among the buildings of men, confounding the reason by the beauty of its architecture and happy plenishing. Looking up at the imposing front, Juder marvelled that all this had cost him nothing. "Would you like to live there?" he asked his mother. "I would indeed," she answered and called down upon his head the blessings of Allah.

Juder rubbed the ring again and told the Ifrit to bring him forty young and beautiful white slaves, forty well-built negresses, forty boys and forty eunuchs. At once the slave of the ring flew off, with forty of his companions, and fetched out of India, Sind, and Persia, every handsome girl or boy they found there. When forty perfect of each sex had been chosen, they sought out eighty of the finest negroes and negresses and carried all to Juder's palace. There Thundering Thunder made them walk one by one before Juder, who found them very much to his liking.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID JUDER to the slave of the ring: "Each must have a beautiful garment; also bring costly robes for my mother, my brothers, and me." Without delay the Jinni clothed all the female slaves sumptuously, and then said to them: "Now kiss the hand of your mistress, the mother of your master. Follow her with your eyes and obey her orders, O blacks and whites." Next the Ifrit dressed the boys and negroes, and sent them to kiss Juder's hand. Lastly he garmented Salam and Salim with peculiar care; so that, when all the palace was dressed, Juder seemed like a king and his brothers like wazirs.

As his new home was of great size, Juder gave one of its wings to each of his brothers, with a full train of women and servants, and reserved the body of the

palace for himself and his mother; so that all three abode in their own places, like so many sultans. So much for them.

When the king's chief-treasurer went in the morning to take from the treasury certain articles which his master needed, he opened the door and found nothing. The vast cupboard might well have recalled to any who saw it these words of the poet:

*Old hollow trees
Look gay with murmuring multitudes of bees
And golden droppings of the combs' increase;
But when the honey's drained and dead
And all the bees have fled,
Remains this sorry sight instead:
Old hollow trees.*

The treasurer gave a loud cry and fell down in a swoon; when he came to himself he ran to the king with upraised arms, crying: "O Prince of Believers, the treasury has been emptied in the night!" "Vile wretch," cried the king, "what have you done with my treasure?" "As Allah lives, I have done nothing with it," answered the man. "I know neither what has become of it nor how it could possibly have been removed. I checked it yesterday evening; but this morning the great cupboard is empty; yet the doors have not been forced or pierced, the locks are intact, and the chains unbroken. It was no ordinary robber who stole the treasure." "Have the two bags also gone?" asked the king. "They have," answered the treasurer.

The king felt reason waver in his head. He rose and, crying to the treasurer to follow him, ran to the cupboard, which he found untouched but perfectly empty. "Who has dared to do this thing?" he cried

and ran, flaming with anger, to assemble his diwan. The emirs and officers of the court hurried into the king's presence, asking each other the meaning of his dreadful rage. They were soon answered, for the king addressed them in these words: "Know that my treasure has been emptied in the night and I do not know what rash creature has dared thus to affront my anger. Ask the chief treasurer if you would know more of the matter." All crowded round the treasurer who repeated his story, saying: "Yesterday the treasure was full; today I found it empty, without a sign of breakage or perforation in the walls and doors." As all stood with lowered heads before the burning glances of the king, there entered that same archer who had denounced Salim and Salam. "O king of time," said he, "I have passed the night without sleep in watching the work of many excellent masons. At dawn I perceived a magnificent palace, such as is nowhere equalled in the world, which had grown to perfection under their hands in a single night. When I asked concerning the palace, I was told that it had been built by Juder, the son of Omar, who has just returned from a voyage, bringing numberless slaves, boys, gold, silver, and jewels. I was also informed that he has delivered his brothers from captivity and now sits like a sultan in his palace!"

"Run to the dungeon!" cried the king; and, when word was brought that Salam and Salim had disappeared, he shouted in his wrath: "Now I know the truth! He who took Salam and Salim from prison also stole my treasure. The man is Juder, their brother; and he has taken away the two bags. O wazir, send an emir at once with fifty soldiers to seal up all their goods and bring the lot of them to me, that they may hang."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN, AS HIS ANGER boiled yet more hotly within him, the king cried: "Let all be done quickly, for I wish to see them die!" "O king," answered the wazir, "I pray you to be merciful and indulgent, even as Allah is merciful and withholds His hand! The man who could build a palace in one night is not likely to be afraid of anyone in the world. I fear for the emir you send to him. Therefore be patient until I find a better way and come upon the truth. When all is known, it will be easier for you to realise your desire concerning these people." "Advise me then, O wazir," said the king; and the wazir continued: "Send an emir, but only to invite Juder to come to the palace; when he is here I shall know how to beguile him with friendship and questioning. After that we shall see. If his power is great, we will take him by craft; if it be small, by force; in either case you shall have him to treat as you list." "Let him be invited!" said the king.

The wazir ordered an emir, whose name was Othman, to seek out Juder and invite him to make one at that day's royal feast. "And do not return without him," added the king.

This Othman was foolish, proud, and self-sufficient. When he came before Juder's palace he saw a eunuch sitting at the threshold on a beautiful bamboo chair. He approached, but the man neither moved nor looked

at him. Yet Othman and his fifty were distinctly visible. "O slave, where is your master?" cried Othman. "In the palace," answered the slave, without turning his head or shifting his careless posture by so much as an inch. "Calamitous and pitchy eunuch," cried the emir in a rage, "are you not ashamed to loll there like a vicious boy while I am speaking to you?" "Not another word from you!" answered the eunuch, "Begone out of my sight!" In his indignation at these words, Othman lifted his mace of office and would have struck the eunuch, for he did not know that he had to deal with Thundering Thunder, the slave of the ring, whom Juder had appointed to be palace door-keeper. As soon as the Ifrit saw this movement, he rose and, fixing the emir with one eye while he kept the other shut, knocked him over with a single breath and beat him four times about the body with his own mace. Furious at this indignity shown to their master, the fifty soldiers drew their swords and threw themselves upon the eunuch. "Would you draw your swords, you dogs? Wait a little!" he cried and, with that, gathered up a handful of them and, plunging their own swords into their bellies, bathed them in each others' blood. Then he began to grind them to pieces, while the rest fled, with Othman leading them, and did not stop running until they reached the king. When they were out of sight, Thunder returned to and lolled upon the chair.

The king's rage knew no bounds when he heard the greeting which Othman had received. "Let a hundred warriors be sent against this eunuch!" he cried. The hundred went, were soundly drubbed with the mace, and fled to tell the king. "Let two hundred be sent!" said the king. The two hundred went up against the eunuch and a large part of them were

broken in pieces by him. Then cried the king to his wazir: "Go yourself with five hundred and bring all these insolent fellows into my presence!" "O king of time," replied the wazir, "I would rather take no man with me and go myself unarmed." "Do as you think best," said the king.

The wazir threw aside his weapons and clothed himself in a long white robe; then he took a large rosary in his hand and walked slowly to the door of Juder's palace, telling his beads the while. He went up to the eunuch smiling and sat down opposite his chair with great politeness. "Greeting, my lord," he said. "Greeting, O human," answered the other, "What do you wish?" As soon as the wazir heard the word "human," he understood that the eunuch was a Jinni and trembled with fear. "Is my master, the lord Juder, within?" he asked humbly. "He is in the palace," answered the Ifrit. Then said the wazir: "My lord, I beg you to go in and say to him: 'Great Juder, King Shams Al-Daulah invites you to visit him, for he is giving a feast in your honour. He sends you greeting and begs you to delight his home with your presence.' " "Wait here and I will ask his pleasure," answered Thunder.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR WAITED humbly while the eunuch went in to Juder, saying: "My lord, the king first sent a large

emir whom I beat, with fifty warriors whom I defeated. Next he sent a hundred warriors, whom I scattered; and then two hundred whom I destroyed; now he has sent his wazir, disarmed and dressed in white, to invite you to eat the meat of his hospitality. What do you say?" "Bring the wazir to me," answered Juder. Thunder brought the wazir into the presence of his master, and the man saw Juder sitting upon a throne, such as no king has had since time began, with a wonderful carpet spread out at his feet, and looking more proud and beautiful than any sultan. He was abashed and speechless because of the beauty of the palace; its ornament, its furniture, its carving, made him feel like a beggar in the presence of his host. He kissed the earth between Juder's hands and called down blessings upon him. When Juder asked what he wanted, he said very politely: "My lord, your friend, King Shams Al-Daulah, sends greeting by me. He desires with all his heart to delight his eyes with a sight of your face and for that reason is giving a feast in your honour. Will you deign to do him pleasure?" "Since he is my friend," answered Juder, "carry my greeting to him and beg him instead to come and visit me." Then he rubbed the ring and when Thunder appeared, commanded him to fetch a beautiful robe. The Ifrit did so, and Juder said to the wazir: "It is for you. Put it on; go and tell the king what you have seen and heard." The wazir dressed himself in the robe (no one in the world had ever worn the like) and, returning to the king, spread himself in the praise of the palace and its contents. "Juder invites you," he said. "Come then, O warriors," exclaimed the king, "to horse and follow me! I will ride my battle charger to go and visit this Juder."

Juder saw him coming with all his train of soldiers,

and said to the slave of the ring: "I desire you to bring me a troop of your companions in human guise, that they may make two ranks in the courtyard for the passage of the king. When he sees their number and quality his heart will tremble and he will realise that my power is greater than his." When the king entered the courtyard, he had to pass between a double line of two hundred Ifrits, terrible and tall, dressed in rich armour and having the appearance of picked guards; therefore his heart was troubled. He found Juder sitting more proudly upon his throne and with greater dignity than any king. He bowed before him and wished him well; but Juder neither rose in his honour nor returned his greeting nor invited him to sit down. Instead he left him standing, in order to increase his own importance, so long that the king lost countenance and did not know whether to go or stay. When at last Juder broke silence, it was to say: "Do you think that you did well to oppress my helpless folk and spoil them of their goods?" "My lord," answered the king, "deign to excuse me; covetousness and ambition led me to act as I did towards your brothers; also, it was my destiny; also, if there were no fault in the world there could be no pardon." He went on for a long time excusing himself and begging forgiveness; among other pleas he recited these lines of the poet:

*Forget the past, child of a noble line,
Forgive, O clement one;
For that is what I would have done
Had but the fault been yours, the pardon mine.*

He continued to humble himself in this way until Juder said: "Allah pardon you!" and permitted him to be seated. Then the fisherman dressed him in the

robe of security and ordered his brothers to spread the cloth and serve numberless extraordinary meats. After the meal he gave rich garments to all who followed the king and showered benefits upon them. At last Shams Al-Daulah took his leave; but it was to return every day and pass all his time with Juder. He held his diwan in the other's palace and directed the affairs of the kingdom there. Their close friendship increased with the days and lasted for a long time.

But one day the king, finding himself alone with his wazir, said to him: "O wazir, I fear that Juder may kill me and take my throne away."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"O KING OF TIME," answered the wazir, "I should have no fear for your throne; for Juder is richer and more powerful than any king and would have no use for a second and inferior throne. But, if you are serious in your apprehension that he may kill you, you have only to marry him to your daughter and divide your power with him, so that the two of you are on an equal footing." "O wazir, can you bring this about for me?" asked the king. "You have only to ask him to visit you," said the wazir, "we will pass the evening in the great hall of your palace and you must arrange for your daughter to put on her best and pass like a beam of light across the doorway. Juder will see her and the apparition will so work upon his curiosity

that he will fall violently in love with her and ask me who she is. I will lean to him mysteriously and, after whispering that she is your daughter, converse subtly with him, letting my words twist in and out of his, until I persuade him to ask for the girl, without having an idea that you know anything about the matter. When they are married there will be certain peace between you, and, on his death, you will inherit the greater part of his goods." "Excellently planned, O wazir!" said the king, and at once prepared a feast and invited Juder to attend it. The young man willingly accepted and the guests sat feasting joyfully in the great hall until the fall of day.

The king had word sent to his wife to dress the girl in her brightest and most costly ornaments, and instruct her to pass swiftly across the doorway of the hall. When the princess hurried, like a beam of light, past the door, shining in beauty and a cascade of gems, Juder uttered a cry and a sigh and called out: "Ah, ah!" His limbs relaxed and his face turned yellow; for love, passion, and hot desire had entered into him. Then said the wazir: "May sickness be far from you, my lord! Why do I see you so changed and suffering?" "That girl, O wazir," answered Juder, "whose daughter is she? She has taken my heart and my reason along with her." Then said the wazir: "She is the daughter of your friend the king. If she really pleases you, I will speak to him and ask him if he will give her to you as a wife." "If you will do that," cried Juder, "you may ask of me all that your soul desires! The king shall receive whatever dowry he requires, and the two of us be friends and kinsmen for ever." The wazir approached the king, saying: "O King Shams Al-Daulah, your friend Juder desires to ally himself with your house. He has begged me

to approach you in the matter of a marriage with your daughter, the lady Asia. Accept my intercession, I pray; he will give you any dowry you ask." "The dowry has already been given," answered the king, "My daughter is a slave to his service; if he accepts her as a wife he will be doing me great honour."

Things only went so far that night; but, on the following morning, the king assembled his diwan and called the sheikh Al-Islam for that special occasion. In the presence of great and small, masters and servants, Juder proffered his request and the king granted it, saying: "As for the dowry, I have already received it."

At once the contract was written; Juder presented the king with the bag of gold and jewels; drums and cymbals, flutes and fifes, played in the marriage; and, while the rest of the world were still feasting, Juder entered the marriage-chamber and took possession of his bride.

Juder and the king lived together in close unison for many months; and, when the king died, the armies called upon the fisherman to be their sultan. At first he refused but, when they continued to importune, he accepted and ascended the throne. His first royal act was to build a mosque upon the tomb of Shams Al-Daulah and to endow it richly. The tomb and mosque were in the quarter Bundukaniya, but, since Juder's reign, the quarter and the mosque itself have been known as Juderiya.

King Juder appointed his brother Salam to be wazir upon his right side and Salim to be wazir on his left. The three lived together in peace for one year; but no longer.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT THE END of that time Salam said to Salim: "How long are we to stay as we are? Shall we serve Juder for the rest of our lives and never know the joy of absolute authority?" "How can we kill him and take the ring and the bag?" answered Salim, "It is for you to find some strategy which will bring about his death, for you are cleverer than I am." Then said Salam: "If I compass his death, do you agree that I shall become sultan and make you my chief wazir? I shall keep the ring and the bag, but you will have the use of them." Salim accepted; and thus the two agreed to murder Juder and enjoy the good things of this world in kingly fashion.

Salam went to Juder, saying: "Dear brother, will you give us the pleasure of entertaining you this evening; for it is a long time since you have crossed the threshold of our hospitality?" "To which shall I come for the feast?" asked Juder. "First to me," answered Salam, "then, after you have tasted my food, you may eat with my brother tomorrow." "There is no objection to that," replied Juder; and at once he accompanied Salam to the wing in which he lived.

Little he knew what awaited him. Hardly had he swallowed the first mouthful of the feast when he fell back in little pieces. So well had the poison done its work that his flesh was scattered to one side and his bones to the other.

At once Salam tried to draw the magic ring from its finger and, when it would not come, cut off the finger and gained possession of the ring in that way. He

rubbed its bezel and, when Thundering Thunder appeared, saying: "Behold I am here! Command and it shall be done!", bade him take hold of his brother, Salim, and put him to death. "Then take up what is left of Juder," said he, "and throw the two bodies down before the chiefs of the army." The Ifrit, whose lot was to obey the orders of any who rubbed the ring, put Salim to death and then, taking up the two bodies, carried them to the feast-hall, where the chiefs of the armies were making merry, and cast them down in the midst. The captains ceased from eating and lifted their arms in the air crying out to the Jinni: "Who has so practised upon the persons of the king and his wazir?" "Their brother Salam," answered Thundering Thunder; and, as he was speaking, Salam himself entered the hall. "O chiefs of my armies, eat and be of a quiet mind," he said, "I have become master of the ring, taking it from my brother Juder. This Ifrit is Thundering Thunder, the slave of the ring. I ordered him to put Salim to death that there should be no rival to my throne; besides, the fellow was a traitor and I feared his plots. As Juder is dead, I am the only king. Will you accept me as your sultan, or would you rather I ordered the Ifrit to destroy you all, great and little, first and last?"

Because of their great fear the captains dared not protest, but answered: "We accept you as our king."

Salam ordered funerals for his brothers and, when all the people had returned from burying them, he sat upon his throne and received the homage of his new subjects. "Now," said he, "I wish to marry my brother's wife." "That may be done," they said, "but you must wait until the four months and ten days of her widowhood are passed." But Salam cried: "I know nothing of such formalities! By the

life of my head, I will go in to her tonight!" Thus the kadis were obliged to write out the marriage contract and men went to warn the lady Asia of what had happened.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"LET HIM COME," said the lady Asia. So, when night had fallen, Salam entered the chamber of his brother's wife and she received him with great demonstrations of joy. As a refreshment she offered him a cup of sherbert. When he had drunk it down, he fell in pieces, a body without a soul. Such was his death.

The lady Asia took the magic ring and broke it in pieces, so that none might evilly use it in the future; also she cut the enchanted bag in two pieces, thus depriving it of virtue. Afterwards she sent to tell the sheikh Al-Islam what had passed and gave this message to the chiefs of the kingdom: "Choose a new king!"

That, continued Shahrazade, is all I know of the tale of Juder and his brothers, of the magic ring, and the enchanted bag. But I also know, O auspicious King, an astonishing tale which is called. . . .